

Pennsylvania State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation

Holiday Inn – Johnstown
250 Market St
Johnstown PA 15901

Minutes of Quarterly Meeting

September 12, 2019
9:00 am – 2:30 pm

State Board Members Present

Jerry Oleksiak	MJ Bartelmay	Liza Conyers
Shannon Austin	Don Rhoten	Mary Brougher
John Tague	Joe Drenth	Ray Hoover
Mike Kiel	Tom Caulfield	

OVR Staff Present

Cheryl Novak	Stan Swaintek	Amanda Turner
Jim Marker	Andy Wagner	Becky Gardner
Chris Zakraysek	Kathy Schrader	Jessie Crum-Lasko
Karen Bilchak	Heidi Speidel	Aleece Rearic
Stacie Andrews	Margie Duranko	Kim Robinson
Teira Maser	Jill Moriconi	Ryan Hyde
Michelle Maggs	Tammy Burke	Denise Verchimak
Jason Gies	Beth Ann Fanning	Melissa Hawkins

Others Present

Passle Helminski	Alivia Weidler	Brandy Burnham
Connie Schen	Barb Zabloutney	Dale Verchick
Dave Szymanowski	John Seely	Janet Fiore
Hillary Walsh	Brenda Brownell-Starner	Anna Gibboney
Carlton Walker	Kenneth Biter	Leslie Cary
Anna Walker	Joe Michener	Lynne Ireland-Knight
Maggie Dimitriadis	Seth Hoderewski	Kay Tyberg
Cheryl Garr	Beth Harris	Jim Antonacci
Lisa Andrews	Carol Ferenz	Lynn Heitz
Tom Lawson	Marty Dombrowski	David Goldstein
Darla Blough	Tim Hoyer	Marsha Drenth
Tim Lucko	Gloria Minori	Matt Seeley
Cortney Lakis	Lori Tyndall	

Public Agenda

Welcome and Opening Remarks – Secretary Oleksiak

- Secretary Oleksiak explained there were technical difficulties and thanked everyone for their patience. He said they would not be able to project the notes on the screen, but there was an interpreter for the crowd or people could sit by Hillary to follow that way.
- Secretary Oleksiak welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced himself to the audience. The State Board members introduced themselves to the audience. Secretary Oleksiak thanked Johnstown for hosting the meeting and their hospitality. He also thanked Jill Moriconi, Rehab Center Administrator at HGAC and said that board members had a tour and dinner at the facility and commented on the fine work of the staff and the students.

Final Minutes, September 12, 2019
Approved December 5, 2019

- Secretary Oleksiak welcomed two new board members and introduced Mary Brougher who was at today's meeting.
- Secretary Oleksiak said the meeting would be recorded today and laid out some of the guidelines from the Sunshine Act that regulate the meetings. Official business begins with the Call to Order and ends with adjournment. Secretary Oleksiak said to be advised that anybody making a public statement at the meeting may be recorded, including when they have opportunities for members of the public to comment. The ability to record the meeting does not extend to being able to record any conversations of anyone in the room before or after the meeting or during any breaks or any personal conversations.
- Secretary Oleksiak said there would be a lot to report as OVR has been very busy since the last meeting, and in this time where a lot of news has been difficult, Ms. Austin will share some good news later on.
- Secretary Oleksiak said there were two things that came up at the last meeting about sending letters. He reported that those letters were sent, one was to the Governor, regarding funding issues around OVR. Secretary Oleksiak said he would make sure the Board received copies of the letters.
- Secretary Oleksiak said they talked to Ms. Lantzy, who is overseeing a Board committee to look at how the Board operates and the functions of the Board itself. The committee had to be suspended, as it had too many members and actually made a quorum of the Board. There are now two new Board members, so the committee may be reconvened.
- Ms. Conyers said she suggested tracking the implications of all the changes while services are closed to people at OVR and asked what are the other ways people can get services. She suggested that it would be good for the Board to have a summary of these issues at every meeting. An example would be tracking the referrals to HGAC to determine if there is a decline, and keeping track of changes so this can be continuously monitored and addressed. Secretary Oleksiak said Ms. Austin would discuss that later. Secretary Oleksiak said they have still been meeting weekly, reviewing what is going on, and have some good news to share related to the issues around closing the order and the budget.

Action Items

Approval of Agenda

- MOTION to approve agenda
- Mr. Drenth moved, Mr. Tague seconded.
- All in favor, none opposed – motion carried.

Approval of Meeting Minutes – June 2019

- MOTION to approve minutes
- Mr. Caulfield moved, Mr. Drenth seconded.
- All in favor, none opposed – motion carried.

Public Agenda

Executive Director's Remarks – Shannon Austin

- Ms. Austin welcomed the Board members and said her goal as the new Executive Director is to make OVR sustainable moving forward, accountable to the citizens of Pennsylvania, as transparent as possible, and innovative with consumers and employers going forward.
- RSA monitoring took place last month. She said in her role in the past few months, she has been doing a lot of assessing and evaluating of where OVR is.
- OVR has been having weekly meetings with the Secretary, and often multiple, weekly internal meetings with her staff on the OOS.

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- She has been sitting down with staff, looking at programs, and looking how we can run more effectively, efficiently and lean, and utilize the talent we have. In addition, Ms. Austin said she had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago to sit down with individuals at HGAC and had several meetings with staff, management teams, and supervisory teams to hear what is going on, any issues, complaints, or concerns about the Center. She said she would be working very closely with them so that we can continue to utilize the Center in a positive way and make it more inclusive by utilizing some of the program development and partnerships that could come out of the Center.
- Ms. Austin said she must take the time to get into the operation of OVR and that she needs to make sure that OVR is vibrant and moving forward the way that it should. Moving forward, OVR will utilize data-driven decisions, look at national trends, state trends, best practices, etc., and provide the tools that managers and staff need to move forward in their jobs. OVR is in the early stages of looking at strategic planning and implementing internal controls where there may be waste. Training will be key for new staff. PETS and various policies are in the forefront. OVR is still open for business with the close of the OOS and continues to serve customers. There are over 36,481 cases open at OVR. Ms. Austin discussed the various services still available to our customers and said we touch 9,000 consumers annually. She said she is looking forward to making Pennsylvania an Employment First State and opening up doors for employment for people with disabilities.
- Ms. Austin announced the good news that L&I was notified on September 9 that OVR received \$27,261,779 in federal reallocation funds. We had put in a high request of \$55 million. An additional \$2.3 million in state funds were received this year, which is an increase.
- Ms. Austin discussed forming a work group for PETS to form a policy.
- Ms. Austin said rapport was developed with RSA, and OVR will probably have continuing bimonthly or quarterly meetings to consult with them on various things. She discussed some of the recommendations they made, including getting into an agreement with WINTAC to help with the PETS policy development.
 - Mr. Tague asked why the Board was not involved with the RSA monitoring. It was reported that some members were involved on the initial call when RSA explained the process, and on the closing call. Ms. Austin explained that WINTAC is the national technical support agency that RSA federally funds in order to support the states' VR services.
- Secretary Oleksiak thanked the Governor's office and the Governor for this budget and the previous budget where the Governor put more money into OVR. He was also appreciative of the help from Senator Casey's office, advocacy groups, and the staff at L&I.

Stakeholder Reports

SILC – Matt Seeley

- A way to track referrals to CILs through CWDS was discussed.
- A representative from a local CIL addressed the Board about working more with OVR. Mr. Kiel asked if they receive many referrals from OVR. The representative stated that they do not; however, they refer a lot of people to OVR.

PaRC – Passle Helminski

- PaRC reached out and asked if OVR had the three-year CareerLink reports from Workforce. Ms. Helminski reported that Workforce is supposed to walk through each CareerLink to see if they are programmatically and physically accessible. More people are being referred to the CareerLinks since the close of the OOS. These reports were not available, and Ms. Stewart reached out to Tracy Turner for more information. Ms. Helminski will follow up and provide an update as they go. Secretary Oleksiak noted that the CareerLinks are not under OVR.

CAP – Steve Pennington

- Mr. Pennington stated that when looking at the State Plan, the accessibility of CareerLinks is part of the Workforce and is not under OVR. During RSA’s monitoring, there was a report from someone within L&I which provided a spreadsheet on L&I’s certification of CareerLinks over the last three years. He said it was important to clarify, looking at the State Plan, that it is L&I’s responsibility to do the certification. He recommended to the Board that since that responsibility is outside of OVR, it might be helpful to ask Workforce to attend a Board meeting to review the report on the CareerLinks and talk about the standards and criteria L&I uses.
 - Mr. Tague thanked Mr. Pennington for the emails he sent to the Board on this issue, but said that not all Board members were on the email.
 - Ms. Austin discussed a checklist they can go through at the CareerLinks. She said she thought OEO was in charge of certification.

ODHH – Melissa Hawkins

- ODHH currently has 525 State-registered interpreters, as well as 71 provisionally-registered interpreters. She can be contacted with any questions regarding Act 57 or the legislation.
- Hearing Loss Expo will take place in November.
- Ms. Hawkins played a video pertaining to ODHH regarding advocacy and information.
- ODHH staff are traveling across Pennsylvania to make sure everyone has access to communication.

Topics for Discussion

Update on Order of Selection (OOS) – Denise Verchimak

- Ms. Verchimak discussed the closure of the OOS. As of September 2, 2019, there are 2,424 people on the wait list for the OOS. OVR has been working on outreach regarding OOS to make sure people have access to services through alternate means. The Board discussed moving into a rolling open of the OOS by application date.
- An OOS workgroup has been meeting, and made recommendations for restructuring the current OOS. Workgroup members researched and evaluated processes and procedures in other states.
 - Step one involves restructuring the functional limitations form, making language more specific toward employment, and removing the “other” option, which has become a catch-all category.
 - The second recommendation is to tighten the language on this same form. They used Virginia’s definition as a model, which has a strong focus on employment.
 - It is a strong recommendation from the workgroup to implement changes slowly, starting with steps one and two, and provide a chance to evaluate the impact before further changes are made.
 - Recommendations three, four and five will take more time. Changes one and two are not in the policy or the State Plan and can be done in CWDS. The other changes require Board approval and State Plan changes, which is a long process.
 - Recommendation three is to change to four factors to be considered MSD, three to be considered SD, and two to be considered NSD. Discussion ensued around factor changes and services.
 - Recommendation four is that counseling, guidance, and job placement always be a service that we provide; however, two additional services would be needed in addition to counseling and job placement services. Counseling and guidance is important to OVR and should be done with every customer as one of the four services.

- Recommendation five is to extend the timeframes: 12 months or more to be considered in an MSD category; six months or more for the SD category; and less than six months for the NSD category.
- It was suggested that before they implement the changes and develop the training, they do a pre-decisional OOS, then provide focus group training, and then do a post-decision. It could take up to two years to evaluate the impact of the changes related to recommendations one and two.
- There was discussion related to two years being too long to wait for changes. Ms. Austin discussed the importance of implementing recommendations number one and two, and how this could help with the OOS. It was noted that the changes are the strong, combined recommendations of the workgroup and the recommendation of the Rehab Council. This was discussed during RSA monitoring and RSA was also in agreement with OVR's approach. The implementation of changes would not affect individuals already on the waiting list prior to implementation.
- Mr. Drenth asked if we could learn from other states' similar experiences and mistakes and asked if that information could be obtained. Ms. Verchimak said she would get that information; however, she did not think that any other state did all five of them at the same time.
- Ms. Brougher voiced concerns about which category someone could be placed in, and gave a scenario of a blind individual and what category they could be placed in. Ms. Verchimak said that individuals would be evaluated person-by-person.
- Secretary Oleksiak explained he would ask for a motion to accept recommendations number one and two of the workgroup. He said he would then ask for further discussion from the Board, and then the public who would like to comment on it.
 - A member of the public came forward to read a statement from a blind consumer who was not able to attend the meeting. This individual lost his job due to downsizing and applied to OVR/BBVS for services through the CareerLink. He stated his frustration because delays with a counselor and delays with the process ultimately placed him on the OOS.
 - Ms. Austin expressed her concern about the situation, saying she would need more information to know if they would be eligible for services, and recommended that they follow-up with Stan Swaintek, Acting Director, BBVS.
 - Another member of the public came forward representing the NFB from Erie. He said, as a citizen of Pennsylvania and stakeholder, he was not informed of the first two recommendations and it was hard to understand things without the visuals. He asked that they receive visuals prior to the meetings in the future. He expressed concern that each segment of the population would be divided equally into the three categories and about the pause taken to evaluate the first two recommendations.
 - Ms. Austin said they can do better and, if they know who is attending the meeting, they can send electronic copies before the public meetings.
 - A member of the public from Altoona came forward and talked about her successful use of VR in other states, but when she contacted OVR for help in Pennsylvania, she had to wait six months for an appointment. She filled out the paperwork, and it was another three months' wait. She said this is too long to wait and makes people want to give up; however, the pros of OVR outweigh the cons. She is afraid the proposed changes and categorizing may create a situation where someone becomes homeless or suicidal waiting for services.
 - A member of the public from Blair County talked about her 23-year-old autistic child whose needs are not being met. She said this meeting was not accessible to an autistic adult because the room was not set up to meet his autism and sensory needs. Her son was receiving services through the Altoona OVR. She discussed the problems he had with

- a job coach who did not consider his needs, and OVR pushing services that he did not want, and how Skills has been meeting his needs.
- An individual receiving BBVS services from Philadelphia discussed her request for a long-standing purchase order to update software that she uses for employment. She was told that even though she was in the MSD category, services could not be provided for her at that time. She said she was told to do her own research in her own local community. She talked about a breakdown in communication. She thought she would not be affected by the OOS closure because she had an existing plan. She feels the caseworkers are not getting the right information.
 - Ms. Verchimak said that Mr. Swaintek would contact her individually regarding this and that her complaint would be investigated.
- Ms. Verchimak said the public testimony was compelling; however, it was unrelated to the motion that was put forward for restructuring the OOS.
- MOTION to accept recommendations numbers one and two of the workgroup.
 - Mr. Bartelmay moved, Ms. Conyers seconded.
 - All in favor, none opposed – motion carried.
- It was reported that OVR is currently in State Plan revisions. A specific part of the State Plan under the OOS states that OVR is not currently prioritizing job retention. Ms. Austin would like OVR to move toward prioritizing job retention. They have public meetings coming up on the OOS where that can be addressed.
 - Concern was raised that people are being told that all services were put on hold and asked if case managers are being told to tell people they cannot get services. Secretary Oleksiak said he was unaware of this and will look into it.
- Mr. Kiel asked if they could receive PowerPoint presentations and such information a week ahead of the meeting. Secretary Oleksiak said they have made improvements with that but they will strive to do better.

OVR Fiscal Update – Ryan Hyde

- Mr. Hyde gave the OVR fiscal update and provided a slide presentation. He discussed efforts to reduce costs under cost containment measures, and updated guidelines for PETS.
 - Mr. Hyde reported that HGAC used some of their reserved funds for operations, about \$4.6 million, which has allowed OVR to cover other costs, particularly costs for client services to get us to 10/1. He had discussions with Christopher Zakraysek at HGAC about how to get at least two months of cash in reserve so they can pay bills.
 - Mr. Hyde gave the cost containment summary and said there was \$2.5 million in Social Security reimbursement, \$4.6 million was used in the HGAC reserve, \$6.3 million was incurred out of CWDS for PETS and VR prior to 7/1, and another \$3 million was purged in commitments from 7/1 to 9/30. That was about \$16.4 million. Now that there is a reallocation award, more strategic planning for the next year can happen.
 - Summary on what was actually spent – \$23 million out for services between 7/1 and 9/30, \$18 million VR, and about \$5 million for PETS services. Estimates were initially higher.
 - OVR has not received any substantial savings from the closing of the OOS to this point. Prior to the closure of the OOS, 8,000 cases were moved into the system, which is roughly the equivalent of two full quarters of new cases. We will have to monitor what that influx of cases is going to do to our finances.
 - Pertaining to what was returned to other states in reallocation funds, nothing official has come out yet; however, unofficial word is that it is around \$165 million.
 - Mr. Hyde said he was asked what the process was to draw the reallocation funds. RSA uses the G5 system to award funding. The comptroller within the state draws that money

down based on expenditures. It will be available for use through 9/30/20. OVR will now qualify for the carryover period, and will have match and unobligated Federal funds.

RSA Monitoring Update – Ryan Hyde

- A lot of work went into this, it was a team effort, and he was proud of the staff involved. Focus was on internal controls/process, PETS, fiscal management, federal reports, the Business Enterprise Program, federal supported employment, and the various performance indicators. Mr. Hyde said they received significant technical assistance and anticipate receiving additional technical assistance moving forward with PETS, consultation on the OOS, financial management on Period of Performance and Prior Approval, ideas on how to better complete the federal report submissions, and received suggestions on how to possibly improve internal controls and track PETS cases in the long term. RSA liked OVR's CWDS internal controls.
- OVR has already had some follow-up discussions with RSA for outstanding items and additional technical assistance. A draft report is expected to be issued by RSA possibly in the fall. OVR will then have 21 calendar days to respond to the draft report, and then RSA will do a final report. OVR will then have 45 days to write up a corrective action plan.

Update on WIOA Combined State Plan for 2020-2024 – Ryan Hyde

- The Board will vote on the Combined State Plan at the December meeting. This is completed every four years with a two-year modification. The Rehab Council have provided their recommendations. There will be a 30-day public comment period sometime in October/November, with public meetings tentatively scheduled for November. Sessions will be run through Central Office with video conferences to every district office. LeeAnn Stewart will do the presentations, with public comment at the local offices.

PETS Update – Kim Robinson

- Goal for PETS right now is to create a formal system for providing PETS in the most documented, efficient, and cost-effective manner. Ms. Robinson said the plan is to assess and serve as many students as possible in the most cost-effective manner and doing that consistent with guidance from RSA.
- Ms. Robinson said OVR is expected to forecast PETS spending every year. There is a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Education – they provide information to OVR about students with disabilities on a yearly basis. There are 130,000 students right now in Pennsylvania that have IEPs, and that number does not include college students or students with 504 plans. There are at least 130,000 students that can potentially fall under PETS. OVR has done a lot of outreach to the schools on PETS and numbers are growing very quickly.
- Providers had asked for more training and technical assistance and have scheduled bi-weekly technical assistance calls. The first call is scheduled for 9/13 from 10–11am, and will be held through January, when the need for additional calls will be assessed.
- Providers requested that individual rates be raised. The decision was made that that suggestion could not be supported.
- Providers also asked for better communication. OVR agrees and is planning the bi-weekly technical assistance calls, doing more intensive training with staff, and developing a communication plan.
- OVR will continue to provide PETS training. Services, self-advocacy instruction, workplace readiness, etc. will be maintained and nothing has been eliminated. A PETS course evaluation was being used to document billing, which every student participating had to fill out; that changed to a progress report that can be filled out by a provider staff. OVR had been asking providers to collect and maintain PETS releases for students involved in PETS. Now we have

the ability to upload those documents and have asked the providers to fill them out and then submit them to OVR.

- Comparisons from similarly-sized states were used to develop changes in provider hourly rates, number of hours for services, and hour limits.
 - Mr. Tague asked if they learned things from the other states. Ms. Robinson said they did learn that they do not want to place limits on our individual students like some states have.
- Discussed the role of work site trainers and provided comparisons to other states.
- Discussed the provider agreement and noted changes.
- Go-live date is 10/1/2019. Providers have been asked to review, sign, and turn in their provider agreements by 9/13, but with the short timelines exceptions will be made. Provider agreement was presented on 8/23.
 - Beth Harris from legal reported that there have always been agreements with providers. This is a matter of updating the agreement because there are certain things the providers have to agree to if they are going to be providing services that are paid for by Commonwealth and federal funds. The provider agreement is the mechanism that allows OVR to submit those payments to the Treasury Department for payment. They are not contracts. If providers and OVR see there is a need for inclusion of something in an agreement, that can be done.
- A workgroup is being developed to create a PETS policy and there is talk with the Department of Education about developing an MOU.
 - Mr. Tague asked if this was the old transition policy that was in place since 2013. Ms. Robinson reported it was the one from 2013 and there were suggestions from a previous workgroup in 2016. Ms. Austin reported the executive team felt that a workgroup was necessary in order to finalize a policy. The policy is different than the provider agreement.

OVR Bureau Director Reports

HGAC – Jill Moriconi

- Ms. Moriconi said she was pleased to have the Board in Johnstown and to host them last night with a dinner and tour of the Center.
- She thanked Secretary Oleksiak for the opportunity to introduce one of their success stories and introduced graduate Astrid Garcia. Ms. Garcia came to the Center initially for vocational evaluation and, after looking at some schools and thinking about where she would like to get her secondary education, she came back to the Commonwealth Technical Institute as a student in the Medical Office Assistant program. Ms. Garcia graduated in April of this year. She completed an externship at a local agency, Allegheny Unlimited Care Providers, who were so pleased with her skills that she was immediately offered employment upon graduation. She has been promoted since that time. She is one of the Center's success stories and she would like to take a couple minutes to tell everyone about her experiences.
 - Ms. Garcia introduced herself and said she was originally from Lancaster. She came to the Center in January 2018 for a two-week evaluation. Before coming to HGAC, she looked at a university which was 10 minutes away from her hometown. She shadowed a student there for a day to see what her experience would be like if she went to school there. It was totally different there and she did not feel they were able to accommodate her needs. She said it was different for her when she came to HGAC. She got to meet a lot of people and had resources she did not think she would have going to school. HGAC helped her succeed with her post-secondary education and also with her outside life and helped her

with getting housing and a job. She said that she had many people she could count on in the school while she was there.

- Ms. Moriconi stated that Ms. Garcia was also an award winner at her graduation and received a CTI Achievement Award based on her high GPA and attendance rates. Ms. Moriconi reported that Ms. Garcia's employer is pleased about working with the Center and said that they have offered to pay some relocation assistance to any other graduates from the Center who may obtain employment with them. HGAC has developed a great relationship with the employer.
- Ms. Moriconi introduced her management team who came with her to the meeting and said they are amazing and that she is very proud to work with them. She said she looks forward to the things she will be doing with Ms. Austin.

Public Comment

Provider Agreement

- A representative of the Sierra Group introduced himself and said with him were representatives of providers from across the State. He reported the completed PETS alert, which all of them received, was the culmination of the work by 20 providers who came together to address concerns for PETS and supported employment. He said the conclusions identified in the program alert with both existing and proposed PETS law must be addressed to provide those services efficiently and effectively. He said this can only be done through collaboration with the community and stakeholders.
- A member of the state-wide provider partnership addressed the Board. She said she was addressing the Board today because a group of competitive employment providers came together to express the recommendations they feel are necessary for services to children under the PETS policy to be implemented. She said much of what they heard today during Ms. Robinson's presentation, they heard for the first time. Some of it, which they knew, they heard on 8/23. By 10/1, they are to take in all the information, adjust their business models, and deliver services to these children as mandated by WIOA. She said customer choice is impacted and discussed how the changes changed the nature and scope of how they do business. She asked the Board to delay implementation of the changes so that the providers can work out a model to deliver services.
- Mr. Pennington addressed the group and said that any substantive change to policy and procedure must follow the notice and comment requirements under the Act. He asked if OVR still planned to introduce their new model on 10/1.
 - Ms. Austin addressed his comments. She said OVR has been collaborating with stakeholders and providers on this and have been transparent with everyone. There can be discussions and communications with providers to see how the system can be improved. She explained that the policy and the provider agreement are two separate issues.
 - Mr. Pennington also asked for a meeting with the Secretary and their legal counsel to discuss the definition of what a substantive change to policy and procedure is and is not, and how that affects this happening on 10/1. He said it may require that someone outside of L&I address that issue and discussed his desire to delay the implementation.
 - Secretary Oleksiak explained that what is being done is consistent with the instructions from RSA, and OVR was told to proceed on 10/1, and that due diligence has been done. Mr. Pennington said he would contact the counsel of RSA to see if it was a legal opinion they provided to OVR that they could proceed with the implementation 10/1.

General Comments

- A member of the public introduced herself as a blind individual with other disabilities from Carlisle. She said she has an IPE that was set up several years ago and recommended she go to training at a center. She discussed four questions she was recently sent by her counselor questioning her need for additional training. The individual said it was her understanding that when the IPE was set up, the training would be carried through and asked if there has been a policy change.
 - Ms. Austin said there have been no policy changes and would have to follow-up with her individually. Mr. Swaintek said he could talk to this individual after today's meeting.
- A member of the public introduced herself as someone who turned 14 years old and said her transition has been delayed and she has been put on a waiting list and she needs to go to a center for blind next summer. The individual's mother then spoke on her behalf, identified herself as blind, and explained about the delays they had from the Pittsburgh office. She relayed her own history with OVR in 2012 when she herself did not receive funding for her first two years of education. She said she believed that a delay in the 10/1 deadline was appropriate. She said she hopes that OVR goes from cutting services and saving money to going out and finding the money to fully fund these programs. She said she had her resume to give to Ms. Austin and would be willing to sit on the Board to help find solutions.
 - Secretary Oleksiak said he would be happy to accept her resume and described how he has met with members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committee. Secretary Oleksiak asked Mr. Swaintek to follow-up with her.
- A member of the public introduced himself and suggested that an ombudsman be hired, directly under the Secretary, so that people who are not getting services can be addressed quickly. He suggested finding a way to get services to those on the wait list who are in most need. He discussed the OOS and how things are categorized in the DSM5 and talked about changing the way things are categorized. He suggested that everyone at the meeting sleep on things and move forward from there.
- A member of the public introduced himself as a blind individual who first received OVR services in 1965. He discussed how, after he was blinded from an accident, Blind and Visual Services, a separate state agency at that time, helped him almost immediately. He said he was able to go to college and considers himself successful through them. He said with the recent changes, people must wait too long for services, people are prevented from getting services, and something needs done about that. He said that he thinks it is wrong for a third of the people be put into each of the three categories.
- A member of the public from Carlisle introduced herself and said she has a blind child who spoke earlier. She said she feared the OOS especially after hearing the numbers today. She said as a teacher, she sees what happens to the kids when they do not get services and she does not want this to continue.
- A member of the public read a letter that was given to him by someone to read at the meeting for him. This person wrote about his nephew and said he started an adult autism support group because of him. He discussed how OVR has helped him meet many goals, however, has been slow in doing so. OVR promised to fund his college education but has not done so yet. He lost his job he was going to start because the business closed and OVR has not reached out to him about employment or support. He said there is not a proper support system in place for dealing with this type of situation and this type of individual.
 - Ms. Austin asked for some contact information for this individual.

Closing Remarks – Secretary Oleksiak

- Secretary Oleksiak thanked everyone who attended the meeting and those who passionately stated their position. He said he spent over 30 years in a classroom as a special education teacher and was a union leader. He said he understands special needs students, worked with

their families, and passionately advocated for them. He said he appreciates their advocacy and wants them to continue that. He said he was concerned about the portrayal of what OVR is about and how they have handled this most recent challenge, because it is inaccurate. Secretary Oleksiak said he was extremely proud of the work they have done on this and would stand behind everything that he, the agency, and OVR has done and said. He said no one wants to deny anyone services, but we are operating with constraints that are not of our making. He said it was very disappointing to hear about people falling through the cracks and we do not want that and want to reach out to those people. He said we care about our customers and our students and we will do everything we can within our power, legally and financially, to provide the services that our fellow citizens need. We are not happy to deny people services and to put them on waiting lists. He said that we will continue to work with the people we have been working with to improve what we are doing, our financial status, to work to change some of the laws, to encourage advocates to speak out. We want to do all we can. He said to keep pushing them—but they will not accept slings and arrows for things that are not accurate. He respects the work that people do at OVR and L&I.

- Secretary Oleksiak reported that the next meeting is December 5 in Harrisburg.
- MOTION to adjourn.
 - Mr. Kiel moved, Ms. Brougher seconded.
 - All in favor, none opposed.
 - Meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm.