

Advisory Committee for the Blind of Pennsylvania  
Quarterly Meeting  
Salus University  
8360 Old York Road  
Elkins Park, PA 19027  
May 19, 2015  
Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present

Joe Drenth, Chair  
David De Notaris  
Rod Alcidonis  
Arnold Bowser  
Carlton Cook-Walker  
Donna Reinaker

Public Attendees

Margaret McKenna  
Lynette S.  
Steve Pennington  
Sheryl Fields  
Giovanna Ochabillo  
Susan Neff  
Karen Walsh-Emma  
Carole Bowser  
Ruth Lotz  
Shelly Faust-Jones  
Ally Wullbrandt  
Kelly Boylan-Luchau  
Rob Schramm  
John Horst  
2 Interpreter Interns  
2 Interpreters  
Doug Rand  
Dawn Sokol  
Chris Cowan  
Lynn Heitz  
Stan Swaintek  
Justin (Gus) Laffey  
Dr. Audrey Smith  
Kerry Lueders  
Connie Moonen  
Stephanie Heaton  
Dr. Susan Oleszewski

Joe Drenth welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Executive Director Report – David De Notaris

- Good morning. Welcome to Salus University. Thank you for joining us. WIOA is on our radar. Currently NPRM are out at [regulations.gov](http://regulations.gov) for comments. I encourage all to review the proposed regs. The comment period is April 15<sup>th</sup> - June 15<sup>th</sup>. We don't want to receive calls, asking why regulations have changed when the comment period is over. We want to make sure the public has a voice. Dr.

Schroeder held a webinar call yesterday, May 18<sup>th</sup>. One hundred and ten people logged onto the call. The next call will be held on June 1<sup>st</sup>. On the call, Dr. Schroeder stressed that individuals shouldn't just go to [regulations.gov](http://regulations.gov) and say what they don't like. He encouraged people to offer suggestions. We need to suggest how things can be done better. Dr. Schroeder also discussed Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETs). Under WIOA, we are required to set aside 15% of funds for transition services. Dr. Schroeder suggested that transition services could include vocational schools, technical training programs and college, including A.A. and B.A./B.S. programs. He believes that if it is going to lead to employment, we should consider it.

- House Bill 400 (HB400) and Senate Bill 200 (SB200) are both on our radar. Currently, OVR serves 30,000. There are 100,000 children who need services. We are hoping for the additional money in our budget that is proposed so that we can serve more individuals.
- It looks like we are on target to meet our overall goals for the Federal Fiscal Year, which ends September 30<sup>th</sup>. Regarding spending, we have money for customer service and the field.
- We continue to look for opportunities to partner with other organizations and agencies, such as Aging and DHS. We are working on a federal grant with the Office of Workforce Development. This grant is for a pilot that will create summer jobs for individuals with disabilities in Philadelphia and Harrisburg. We are also working to partner with Corrections and the Federal Department of Labor to work with individuals in the correctional system who have a disability. The statistics regarding individuals in the correctional system are staggering: 80% of people in the system have a disability.
- Staffing Updates: We are working on filling the Director's job at HGAC and working on permanently filling the BBVS Director job.
- The next OVR Board meeting is June 11<sup>th</sup> in King of Prussia. At this meeting, we will be discussing HB400, WIOA and clarification of the vehicle policy. The Secretary will chair this meeting.

Mr. Pennington suggested that there be a BBVS office presentation at the next State Board meeting.

Mr. De Notaris

- Thank you. Philadelphia BBVS DA, Lynn Heitz, will be presenting at the next State Board meeting.
- In conclusion, I am grateful for this opportunity to serve as Executive Director, and I look forward to upcoming partnerships and to hearing from you.

The Committee requested that Gus email them the YouTube video of the WIOA call with Dr. Schroeder. OVR will be breaking these calls out into segments for listening purposes.

Mrs. Cook-Walker

- Regarding SB200, the money sounds good. There are a lot of students in transition who don't qualify for services from OVR. Will we get federal match if services aren't what we can provide?

Mr. De Notaris

- I don't know that they are one and the same. In the Governor's proposed budget, there is an additional \$5 million for OVR, not tied to SB200 or HB400.

Mr. Pennington

- HB400 was amended a second time to increase OVR's roll to increase pre-employment transition services. It is OVR's job to facilitate those services. I submitted a revised bill to Senator Tartaglione who is the Chair of the L&I committee and Senator Baker, Majority Chair. My goal is to make this obligation of facilitating transition services something that is shared by ODP, the Bureau of Special Education and OVR. I included language that requires a formal inter-agency agreement between three agencies as well as a reporting requirement so that the General Assembly can get a full picture of transition services, what needs improvement and what is working. One concern regarding WIOA is that the services, pre-vocational services, under the RSA regulations are no longer an eligibility program. The VR Act is now being split between a group/population which is entitled to certain services, regardless of whether they

are eligible or not. RSA regulations don't limit the capacity of OVR/BBVS to provide services. With WIOA, pre-employment services will be provided to individuals who are potentially eligible. Regulations extend that to all students. HB400 is much more of a blanket bill. Whether or not there is a conflict between HB400 and WIOA, is the question.

Mrs. Cook Walker

- I am concerned as to whether or not we will be "punished" for services we can't provide.

Mr. De Notaris

- I suggest that if individuals would like to further this discussion on WIOA, HB400 and SB200, there can be a conference call prior to June 15<sup>th</sup> to discuss

Mrs. Cook-Walker agreed to organize a conference call.

VR Program Update - Stan Swaintek

- VR: Most of our offices are at 50% of their goal. Due to staffing issues, such as retirements, Harrisburg and Erie are not close to their 50% goal. Caseloads in these offices have been uncovered for awhile, sometimes 2-3 months.
- Homemakers: Our goal is 124. The goal is set to allow for use of specialized services money. WIOA regulations would take away homemakers. If we are not allowed to use homemakers anymore, we will have to use some SS-C money to serve adults.

Mr. De Notaris

- Good advocates would go to [regulations.gov](http://regulations.gov) and comment that it is crucial that we continue to use homemakers. Currently, we receive 400K. If there is a way that number can be increased that would assist greatly.

Ms. Reinaker

- Can we have talking points so that we are all advocating for the same thing?

Mrs. Cook-Walker will work with OVR on talking points.

Mr. Swaintek

- Staffing:
  - o Mrs. Faust-Jones has been working to change specifications for VRTs and O&Ms.
  - o We have done interviews for the Harrisburg DA position. We are looking to fill the ADA position in Philadelphia.

Special Programs Update – Shelly Faust-Jones

- We are working with universities to promote internships. Currently, we can offer unpaid internships. Thank you to the DAs in Wilkes-Barre, Erie, Pittsburgh and Harrisburg for taking on unpaid interns and assisting.
- Summer Academy Prep: We are currently working on clearances for all staff. Thank you to those on the Committee who will participate on the Career Day panel. At Summer Academy, we will have an intern from Slippery Rock University. The intern from last year from Slippery Rock University has been accepted into the University of Pittsburgh O&M program.
- SSP Update: 57 SSPs are trained in PA. Services for SSPs started 5 weeks ago. We have filled 15 jobs to date. Marsha Drenth has been very helpful in the training. Congratulations to Marsha Drenth on her internship completion and graduation.

ILOB Update – Susan Neff

- We have conducted 5 Jump Start Sessions in 2015.

- We continue to analyze the way we provide services to ILOB customers.
- We have partnered with the Veterans Administration. We will be coordinating efforts to compliment each other's services. This is the beginning of a great, new partnership.
- We have also partnered with the Department of Aging.
- We have been involved in monitoring visits, analyzing operation procedures, etc.

Mr. Drenth requested copies of the monitoring visit reports.

Ms. Neff will provide copies of these monitoring reports to the Committee.

Ms. Neff

- The Blindness Awareness Expo will be held June 2<sup>nd</sup> from 9:00 AM– 2:00 PM at the Capitol.
- We have a webpage for the Expo, and it lists the history of why we have the Expo, introduces the speaker, etc.
- We are developing a webpage for the Committee as well.

Assistive Technology Update – Justin (Gus) Laffey

- Doug Williams from PaTTAN and I are planning the AT portion of the Summer Academy. We met three weeks ago in State College for a prep meeting. AT is a huge part of all the program areas for the Summer Academy.
- iPads are ready and almost all configured to deliver to staff. In the coming weeks, I will be delivering these iPads and training the staff on how to use them in the fields and with customers.
- Andrea Bodnari provided training on BlindSquare for OVR Staff. O&M staff received ACVRP credits for this.
- We will be using iBeacons at Summer Academy. In our cafeteria at Penn State, one of the most difficult areas to navigate, if we place iBeacons in it, they will produce a signal, as you are navigating the cafeteria. This gives the students an idea of where they are in cafeteria, sort of an indoor GPS that uses RF signals. You can use them outdoors to determine location as well.

Mrs. Drenth

- I could use this with my braille display. This technology could be applicable for deaf-blind individuals.

Mr. Laffey

- The iPad or device would just need a data connection. It does work with your iPhone.

Mr. Swaintek

- This will be something new that local media in the State College area will be interested in.

Mrs. Cook-Walker

- This technology will be helpful for deaf-blind and non-English speakers too.

Mr. De Notaris

- Newline Update: Alerts are on a test box right now. We are hoping to have that released in the beginning of July. A new publication was just added: *Guidepost*.

BEP Update – Kelly Boylan-Luchau and Ally Wullbrandt

- Some post offices have closed. This is why site locations have gone down.
- Average net income for 2014 for an operator: 65K.
- We are working with the Elected Committee regarding mediation issues.
- We will be setting up goals for the upcoming year.
- Twenty waivers are being given out.
- We are re-vamping the medical now that there is excess money from medical.

- We interviewed a candidate yesterday. We have one candidate awaiting a facility, two in school and two in practicum.
- We have 6 students awaiting interviews.
- We have two agents and many annuitants helping us out. We are currently updating BEP agent specifications.
- We are also streamlining the profit & loss statements.
- If the Committee has any recommended candidates, please contact us.
- We now have a resource account for complaints.
- We have a conference call coming up with E.C. to talk about allowable expenses.

#### Nominations

- Mr. Alcidonis presented the nominations
  - o Joe Drenth, second year as Chair
  - o Carlton Cook-Walker, Vice Chair
  - o Dr. Boltz, Secretary
- Mr. Alcidonis asked for any additional nominations from the Committee?

Mrs. Reinaker motioned to close the nominations for Chair. Mrs. Cook-Walker seconded.

All were in favor of nominating Mr. Drenth as Chair. All said, "Aye." None opposed. Joe Drenth was re-elected for a second term.

Ms. Reinaker motioned to close the nominations for Vice Chair. Mr. Alcidonis seconded. All were in favor of nominating Mrs. Cook-Walker as Vice Chair. All said, "Aye." None opposed. Carlton Cook-Walker was elected as Vice Chair.

Mrs. Reinaker motioned to close the nominations for Secretary. Mr. Alcidonis seconded. All were in favor of nominating Dr. Boltz as Secretary. All said, "Aye." None opposed. Dr. Boltz was elected as Secretary.

#### ACBP Business

- OVR Central Office will check if the first floor conference room is available for a November 10<sup>th</sup> quarterly meeting.
- August's meeting will be held in Erie, PA.

#### Salus University Presentation

Dr. Susan Oleszewski, Chief of Staff to the President

- Thank you BBVS for the many years of funding that helped us to meet our mission of serving the community. I am an optometrist by trade. We work with the school district of Philadelphia and are moving into Montgomery County and Norristown. We are collaborating with school districts and assisting school nurses. The school district of Philadelphia is short-handed and has financial hardships. We have done our best to take kids who have failed school to our clinical facilities to receive the care they need. There are many challenges to transport the children to our facilities for treatment. You cannot be educationally ready to excel in classroom if you don't have good vision care. Three years ago, we identified a great need in Norristown school district, assisting school nurses with vision care. A lot of families in Norristown school district are not insured. We established a school-based clinic. At the end of the year, we will have provided services to close to 300 students. There is a state-mandated vision screening in PA. Beyond what is required by the state, school nurses need assistance with non-verbal kids to provide vision services and screenings. We hope to build on this relationship with school nurses. Various businesses have assisted with funding. Mobile clinics are, in some cases, the only way you can get care to these children. For children, this care is essential. If you want to reverse poverty's cycle, education is the key. You can't get a good education without vision care and vision.

Mr. Alcidonis

- Do you serve any students who are completely blind?

Dr. Oleszewski

- We put the offer out there. We are primarily taking kids who can have their vision corrected and in some cases who have a little bit more of a vision problem.

Mr. Alcidonis

- Are you equipped to address a student with that type of need? My question came from your statement: vision is a key to learning. I take an issue with this statement since I am completely blind.

Dr. Smith

- The population they are working with have undetected vision problems. Screening efforts are generic. Dr. Oleszewski's concentration is on students who can have corrected vision, and we can improve their learning.

Mr. Alcidonis

- My problem is that I don't want this to be going out to the general public. It causes me pain and creates a misconception. We have national organizations fighting to get rid of that perception. I understand in your context that the language is appropriate. It does, however, further damage the goal that this Committee is fighting for.

Mrs. Cook-Walker

- You are getting funding from local businesses? I applaud what you are doing and your creative fund raising efforts.

Mr. Pennington

- It might be helpful to clarify that corrected vision will make a difference.

Mrs. Cook-Walker

- We need to correct child's vision or provide services to help the child have equal access.

Dr. Smith

- The University of Pittsburgh, Salus University and Kutztown University all prepare people to work with vision impairments through three programs: O&M, VRC and VRT.

Low Vision – Dr. Kerry Lueders

- The Low Vision Program is primarily an online master's degree program. Summer is hands-on learning on campus, and the internship is after the courses. The Program is grant funded. In the summer of 2014, we were up for submitting a new grant: Building Relationships to Enhance Independence Nationwide (BRAIN) Initiative. The goal: build relationships with agencies and develop unique partnership with universities and the VR system. This summer, we are sending some of our LVR students to the BBVS Summer Academy for a week. Our students will be accompanying different groups and working with students and lead instructions, observing and seeing if there is a low vision strategy that students could benefit from. Being able to integrate students into the Summer Academy will help give them
- experience with individuals with visual impairments. One of our objectives is to send out information on this partnership.

Dr. Smith

- We have scholarships available. We give highest priority to those coming from the state VR agency. We can make PA the blue ribbon state for modeling relationships and partnering with State VR and universities.

Low Vision Clinic/POB Program – Stephanie Heaton

- We have a low vision team at the Feinbloom Center: Occupational Therapists, Social Workers and Rehab Staff. We work very closely with the Philadelphia District Office. They provide funding for us and referrals. This is a great partnership. At the Special Populations Rehab. Center, we work with individuals with multiple impairments. These individuals come to us for vision services. Through BBVS, we have been able to get funding to assist with low vision mobile clinics for children and adults. We have various grants for glasses for children. POB provides funding for us as well. One other program, Bryn Mawr Rehab Hospital, is where we assist with neuro vision exams.

Mrs. Cook-Walker

- Blind students are missing. So many times we want to maximize vision. My roll as a teacher is to maximize a student. I hope that these low vision therapists can focus on blindness as well. We want to make sure we are incorporating non-visual tools.

Ms. Heaton

- Part of our team includes O&Ms and VRTs. They work with teachers and do technology assessments and environment assessments.

Mr. Alcidonis

- Have you ever had students come to you that you can't correct their vision and you have to teach them skills to work with vision loss?

Ms. Heaton

- Yes.

Ms. Lueders

- Two of us at the institute are O&M specialists as well. We work with students to encourage working with tools (Long canes, etc.).

Ms. Heaton

- One SW is totally blind and a great resource.

Dr. Smith

- The emphasis was supposed to have been on LV screenings because of the partnership we have. It is important to note that in all of our programs we update our students on technology, tools and strategies from low vision to total blindness. We received grants from the Department of Education to send our students to technology training. It is impossible to keep up with the training.

Mrs. Drenth

- I am deaf-blind. I am curious how much are your LVR students taught about hearing loss or about people who are deaf-blind, Rehab Teachers and O&M instructors specifically? As you know, our population is aging and more and more people are losing their hearing. I have run into a lot of people who don't know how to work with an individual who is deaf-blind.

Dr. Smith

- Yes. There is a hand-in-hand series done through American Federation for the Blind. We have an audiology department here at the University. We just started a speech and language program, and we are involving them in our programming for the students. It is not concentrated in that program. In our future, we would like to create a deaf-blind program. Creating those programs is a five year sequence. We just finished our audiology program.
- Closing Remarks: We find individuals with severe vision problems not referred for services. Transportation and money are a barrier to vision services. We hope to partner with BBVS/OVR to expand the Philadelphia pilot program to not just screenings but referring to appropriate services and working with service groups and agencies. There is a high failure rate for screenings; it is alarming. We are hoping to help all kids, regardless of their visual condition. It's all about partnership.

Ms. Reinaker

- In the Department of Aging, there is a program called PA Link. Is there some kind of registry/single resource facility/program? That would be helpful.

Dr. Smith

- I don't think the linkings are as strong in our field. There are isolated pockets that are going on. There is no reason PA can't be a blue ribbon state in this area.

Mr. Pennington

- Do you do home modifications?

Dr. Smith

- Yes. So much can be done with simple modifications.

Public Comments

- None

Adjourned.