

CAP UPDATE

Volume 1, Issue 1

November 2003

News & Notes

By Jamie C. Ray

Hello and welcome to the first issue of what we hope will be an informative newsletter for people with disabilities across Pennsylvania! For those who may not know, the Client Assistance Program (CAP) is the statewide advocate for persons with disabilities in Pennsylvania who are seeking or receiving vocational rehabilitation services from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), the Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS), a Center for Independent Living (CIL), or any other project, program, or facility that is receiving funds under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended.

CAP's mission is to ensure that vocational rehabilitation in Pennsylvania is open and responsive to your needs as a person with a disability. If you have a comment, question, concern or compliment about your vocational rehabilitation experience, we want to hear from you!

If you would like to subscribe to our newsletter please e-mail us at info@equalemployment.org. Be sure to include the word "newsletter" in your subject line. There is no charge to subscribe.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Spotlight on the Vocational Rehabilitation Process
- 1 News & Notes
- 3 Your VR Rights
- 4 Calendar of Events
- 4 Seek & Find

Customer Corner: The Vocational Rehabilitation Process

Part I of a Monthly Series

By Margaret Passio-McKenna & Jennie Philip
Client Assistance Program

When you apply give these 10 things a try:

Ann is an individual with a disability. She heard from a friend that the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) helps people with disabilities who are trying to work. She placed a call to her local OVR office and was sent an application. She met with a counselor and the first question Ann asked was, "When will you find me a job?" The counselor's response was, (1) "The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is not a job placement agency. We help individuals with disabilities remove the barriers they are facing in finding and/or keeping a job." Although Ann was surprised by that answer, she still knew that she came to the right place. The counselor began to ask Ann a series of questions. Among one of the questions asked was if she received SSI or SSDI? Ann said that she did not, but she wondered why her counselor would ask that. (2) The counselor then went on to explain to her that if she was an SSI or SSDI

continued on page 2

recipient that she would be presumed eligible for OVR services. The counselor explained to Ann that her (3) eligibility for services will be determined 60 days from the date her application was completed. She also mentioned that if she was denied eligibility she could re-apply at any time as long as she is willing and able to work. Ann then asked a very important question, she said, "What if I don't agree with the ineligibility determination?" The counselor replied, (4) "Well I was getting around to explaining this, but I'll tell you now. If you do not agree with any decision made by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation you always have the right to appeal that decision. And if you need help with your appeal the Client Assistance Program (CAP) can work with you during this process." The counselor then handed Ann a bright pink bookmark that says, "CAP" in big black letters. Ann was relieved to hear that she has other supports advocating for her during the vocational rehabilitation process. After all of the formalities were taken care of the counselor began to ask Ann what her vocational goal is? (5) Her counselor explained that she needs to choose a goal that is realistic for her and consistent with her abilities, capabilities and interests. Ann showed interest in a couple of different goals. Her counselor suggested that she research these job titles to see if there are employment opportunities in the labor market for them. Ann asked how she should go about researching these goals. Her counselor

suggested that she try calling potential employers. She should ask them about the qualifications needed for that job, some of the tasks she would be required to do and if there was a demand for this type of work. Her counselor also mentioned looking on the internet for training and requirements of certain jobs. "Checking out the dictionary of occupational titles is also a good resource," the counselor added.

(6) The counselor asked Ann what she thought some of her strengths and weaknesses are. Ann replied, "I'm not really sure of what my strengths are but I know my weakness is lack of organizational skills. The counselor replied, "Its okay that you don't know, we could pay for an assessment that will help shed light on your strengths and weaknesses. Ann replied, "Well a part of the reason why I cannot identify my strengths is due to the fact that I've been out of work for a long time." (7 & 8) The counselor then asked Ann to share her employment & training history. Ann was asked about the positions she had, the type of tasks performed, the date of the jobs and the reasons for leaving. She was also asked to provide information regarding any training such as high school diploma, GED, post-secondary classes or certification programs. She didn't know all of this off-hand, so the counselor told Ann it was her responsibility to call soon after the meeting to provide further information.

(9) The counselor asked Ann if she brought any medical information regarding her disability. Ann did remember to bring all of her medical documentation

counselor suggested that OVR could send her to the doctor for an evaluation. The counselor added, “If you didn’t have health insurance Ann, OVR could pay for the evaluation.”

As Ann was getting ready to leave the counselor reiterated the information about the Client Assistance Program (10). She said, “CAP will provide answers to some of your questions regarding your rights and responsibilities during the OVR process.” Ann thanked her counselor and said that she will call by the end of the week with the rest of the information.

As mentioned in the story, here are some tips that you should keep in mind when applying for vocational rehabilitation services:

1. To realize in advance that the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is not a job placement agency

2. To be aware that you are granted eligibility if you are an SSI/SSDI recipient

3. To have a determination of eligibility within 60 days to apply and re-apply at any time as long as you are willing and able to work

4. To know your appeal rights when you are denied application or eligibility

5. To think of a job that will be realistic for you to ask questions

6. To discuss with your counselor some of your strengths and weaknesses

7. To provide a list of places you have worked, type of job, date and reason for leaving.

8. To provide up to date information regarding any training you have had

9. To provide up to date medical information to have evaluations, assessments, medications to provide information of medical insurance

10. To be notified of the services of the Client Assistance Program

KNOW YOUR VR RIGHTS

You have a right to...

- 1. apply for OVR/BBVS services at any time.
- 2. have OVR/BBVS decide your eligibility for services within 60 days.
- 3. have OVR/BBVS notify you in writing if you are found ineligible for services and advise you of your appeal rights.
- 4. select a career that matches your ability and choose the service providers.
- 5. develop and amend an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) that meet your personal needs.

KNOW YOUR VR RIGHTS

You have a right to...

- 6. be notified in writing of the Client Assistance Program.
- 7. review your file and ask for a copy.
- 8. have OVR/BBVS notify you in writing if a decision is made to close your file and advise you of your appeal rights.
- 9. appeal any concern or problem that you may have with OVR/BBVS.
- 10. to timely services.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SPECIAL EVENT

PITTSBURGH, PA

DECEMBER 2, 2003

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) State Board Meeting, Sheraton Station Square, 9am – 12 noon. Jamie Ray will provide a brief update on the activities of CAP and the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council. The meeting is open to the public.

SPECIAL EVENT

HARRISBURGH, PA

DECEMBER 10, 2003

Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC) meeting. Harrisburgh Hilton Towers, 9:30 am – 3 pm. This meeting is open to the public.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE YOUR SPECIAL EVENT POSTED ON OUR NEWSLETTER PLEASE CONTACT US.

CAP is administered by:

Center for Disability Law & Policy (CDLP)

1617 JFK Blvd. Suite 800

Philadelphia, PA 19103

215-557-7112 Voice/TTY

888-745-CDLP (Toll Free)

215-557-7602 Fax

www.equalemployment.org

E-mail: info@equalemployment.org

Seek & Find

Please take a minute to have some fun and work your brain with our Seek & Find. This could help in getting you started with seeking and finding a job. The words are taken from our story which begins on page 1.

S Y M J O I L G C O A N F T
E D X W C V D L R Z V C O B
I E I G K H R M O C N L Q L
T I K S E S S E N K A E W A
I P A L A S R N E B Y S M O
L G B S Y B T P O Q T U N G
I N C A L K I R Z R W F S L
B A E Y O R M L E D H J I A
I Y D W Q A F N I M X K U N
S B L V R N G R U T G V A O
N Q A K O T M I P S I Z Y I
O H E R H C L G W R B E C T
P T Y S R M A H G A F D S A
S L M G Q I U T M V P T E C
E N S P C D E S E L U P D O
R Y G L V A I R A M P J L V
R O K E N T P G S D O L E Y

Words to find:

Disabilities

Advocate

Vocational Goal

Apply

Labor Market

Barriers

CAP

Rights

OVR

Responsibilities

Strengths

Weaknesses

Look forward to receiving the answers in our next newsletter!