

Some of the feedback we have heard to date on the impact of OVR decision to decrease and/or suspend funding to Pre-Employment Transition Services

January 2019

- Our organization primarily offers group services, so needless to say, this has had a major impact on our OVR efforts. Roughly 90-100 clients were directly affected due to lack of authorization
- This interruption has been detrimental in regard to our opportunity to provide additional valuable programming to our clients, which itself was strongly encouraged by the state for us to implement.
- We were recently approved to provide these services and was also in the process of meeting/working with potential schools ...and now have been told that Pre-ETS Services was on hold until further notice.
- A couple of months ago, we were told by [local] OVR that there was a need for Pre-ETS providers - which pushed us to apply and now for some reason there is less funding? The impact that this is having would be on the students who may not have an opportunity to experience work before they graduate.
- We have completed the ongoing RAPs and put all future plans on hold based upon the email notifications. We submitted a RAP for Group Services in [our] County before receiving notification of ceasing services. That has been put on hold. We have 4 RAPs in the preliminary stages in [3] counties that were put on hold in addition to the school meetings to confirm services with lead teachers and administrators.
- We are VERY concerned about this delay. This delay breaks the continuity of our relationship with 150 students in Northwest Pennsylvania. Our students are very excited to learn about Career Opportunities and wholeheartedly are engaged in a activities teaching them work-based readiness and job exploration
- We have spent a year developing curriculum, a classroom and a computer lab to provide these services. In addition to that, we have also invested in developing a PIC Career Portal to be used by students for Job Prep and Job Exploration. Students would be able to use the Career portal at PIC, in school, and/or at home to find and prepare for a job they really want. We were eagerly awaiting approval for our provider agreement but, we have not been able to provide services to this point.
- Very confusing too is that during the 'WIOA years' [our local] OVR staff constantly state during events, provider meetings, and small group meetings that we as providers still have more work to do because we have not reached the "thousands of eligible students

in need” of our services. As recently as a provider meeting a few months ago we have been encouraged to and have invested heavily in building the capacity needed to help the Commonwealth/OVR reach its WIOA students outreach and service goals.

- We have several RAP authorization approval requests coming up in the next few months that are critical to the completion of our annual programing for the students we serve.
- We have a summer program for which we are already recruiting students for and will be doing a RAP authorization approval request. Like any new programing, we have invested heavily in building relationships and have generated momentum with our high school clients and parents who have committed to sending students to our summer classes. After lots of financial and relationship building and investments, we expected this summer to be our most well attended.
- We are just a small nonprofit committed to working hard to help the students we serve and to help the Commonwealth meet its WIOA goals. We have been encouraged to and have invested HEAVILY in our PETS approved programs and they are going very well. We are helping lots of kids and have made commitments to our school clients and the students and families we all serve. To have a disruption to our business model will cause significant financial and reputational damage.
- We have also seen an impact with our work-based learning experiences. We have found job placements for students who we have been instructed to put on hold due to “frozen” funds. At this time we are unsure when services could be authorized and that is the information we are communicating to businesses. We have stopped completing intakes for WBLE services on any new referrals until we get clarification of authorizations/services moving forward. We have also refrained from hiring staff until we get some clarification on what PETS will look like moving forward.
- We are finding that each District Office is providing different information. One District Office we work with emailed all providers that there is a temporary hold on authorizing PETS services. The temporary hold is anticipated to be removed at the end of January. We have not received any updates from the other two District Offices we provide services in other than they are unable to authorize any services at this time.
- I asked The OVR rep to inform the school of this. The school was not happy, as a result of this change they will have to revise 60 IEP’s, not to mention just walking out on the students in the middle of services.
- I am horrified as a staff member of a CIL (Center for Independent Living) on how this is going to affect students in need, and the quality of their education. The school I was helping had already made it clear they are struggling to keep up with all the new mandated topics every special ed student with an IEP now must be taught. The (local)

high school was so relieved to have help with teaching their students all of these new topics such as life skills, soft skills, pre-ETS skills. So the only people who will suffer by this policy change are the students. The very population we are supposed to help.

- With competitors dropping out of providing Pre-Ets along with services being placed on hold we are getting negative feedback from the families of those that were referred that are now on hold as well as the school districts giving us negative feedback due to their not understanding this "hold" was an OVR decision not ours as a provider.
- We started business relationships with new community contacts for WBLE not knowing the hold was going to happen and then had to turn around and retract the agreements of WBLE for those locations. This gave us negative feedback from those businesses.
- We hired staff in order to meet the request of the referrals we received for WBLE Development in anticipation of providing the 90 hours of experience and for the Shadowing referrals we received as well.
- We were planning group services for spring of 2019 in several school districts. We were about to send the RAP sheets when we received the letter from Ryan Hyde..
- Students are supposed to start a WBLE in a week. Since some services have been frozen and I haven't received any PO's, I'm hoping that these position for the students will still be there when I finally receive their PO's. I have also received some phone calls from parents and teachers wondering why nothing has been done with these students.
- When we got the memo last week I was in the process of completing the RAP forms for 2 group classes in (local school), had requested through OVR in December
- The week before the class was set to start I was told all pending RAP's were being put on hold. By a miracle the first class was approved only because it was set to start 1/22, and that was no notice to them, and some paperwork was never seen by OVR, so they made that 1 exception. However the 2<sup>nd</sup> class that was to run from March-May of 2019 was denied. Every Pre-ETS service my agency excels at, such as group independent living skills, financial literacy class, travel training, helping a student get a PA state ID, have all been suspended.
- I put in a RAP for a PETS service in November that has yet to be approved. The other one that was approved when I placed it in November is wrong. It states only 1 day while the RAP obviously says a series of 5 modules. I am unable to complete that billing.
- The programs we have put in place since our relationship with OVR began have benefited our students greatly. I am unsure if my administration will continue these programs without the PETS program. They were developed as an addition to programs we already have in place. This would be detrimental to our students. We work with some of the most severe students. Self-advocacy, travel training, workplace readiness

are our focus, at this time. The plan was to have travel training for ~50 students, mock interviews for 15-20 students and a life skills program including self-advocacy and self-determination for 10-15 students during the second semester of the year.

- We have found job placements for students who we have been instructed to put on hold due to “frozen” funds. At this time we are unsure when services could be authorized and that is the information we are communicating to businesses. We have stopped completing intakes for WBLE services on any new referrals until we get clarification of authorizations/services moving forward. We have also refrained from hiring staff until we get some clarification on what PETS will look like moving forward.
- We were in the process of developing Work Based Learning Experience work sites for 29 students. These services have been put on hold because even if we are able to develop the sites, the next step services (WBLE-L) will not be authorized for those students. Students, parents and teachers are being told to contact their OVR counselors regarding the suspension of these services.
- We have 14 students currently receiving Job Shadow services. Typically, these students would move into WBLE-D then WBLE-L services - work site development and participation. However, once their Job Shadows are over, they will have to wait to receive any other PETS services, until OVR decides what they are doing.
- We had to turn down a new school for PETS classes (group instruction) and were not able to develop a RAP for that school.
- These restrictions have also affected our budget and we are not able to make any hiring decisions at this time since we cannot project what is going to happen with PETS services. The longer these restrictions continue the impact could influence layoff decisions for up to 10 part-time Job Coaches and 1 full-time Transition Specialist.
- I am concerned that the law clearly states students must receive the classroom piece to move through the OVR process. If funding is cut and these classes cannot take place, where does that leave the student and the student’s family upon graduation? We must start looking long-range when we write legislation this impactful. If we doubt our ability to fund long-term than we should not tie students and families to legislation that will be impossible to meet. As not just a provider, but as a mother of a child with a severe disability I find this unconscionable.