



2022 PRA Annual Presidents Message

February 1, 2022

As we begin a new year, I would like to take a few minutes to share with you some of the great things we have been able to accomplish in 2021 along with some of the strategic plans for 2022. The COVID-19 Pandemic continues to impact so many families, organizations and business with unprecedented, widespread impacts on households across the USA. PRA has made every effort possible to persevere through the pandemic, just as most Americans have, continuing to strive to meet the needs of its members, future members, and at its core, persons with disabilities. The COVID-19 Pandemic affects all segments of the population and is particularly detrimental to members of those groups in the most vulnerable situations. As stated at the end of 2020, while the pandemic continues, there is hope in sight. The Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Association and its valued members from various organizations and agencies, from private, public and not-for-profit sectors, continue to work daily to provide services to persons with disabilities in this ongoing crisis.

Like every other year, 2021 began for PRA with the introduction of some new board members. We virtually welcomed Ray Feroz, Yvelisse Gonzalez, Janetta Green, Tracie Maille, and Jeff Seabury to the board.

At the end of 2020/beginning of 2021, PRA obtained 2 Zoom-Pro Licenses, with the financial support of the regional MAR Board. This decision was based on the virtual climate of the previous year in 2020, and what was anticipated to be mostly virtual (if not entirely) for 2021. This decision allowed PRA to continue to operate efficiently, effectively, consistently and most of all, safely in 2021. PRA was able to successfully offer its member-related services as we have always done in the past, along with some additional and very exciting services this year.

In 2021, The Pennsylvania Rehabilitation was approved to be a CRCC Alternative Provider and developed the PRA Continuing Education Committee. These were both done with the intention of expanding PRA's benefits to its members and reach within our community. With this goal achieved, the PRA then began to offer it Lunch & Learn series, offering CRCC Pre-Approved webinars.

In February, PRA was pleased to begin it inaugural year of the PDI Continuing Education Committee, providing continuing education opportunities in the form of Lunch & Learns for its PRA Members and regional MAR members free of charge, and other non-PRA members (at a nominal cost). This committee will always be chaired by the incoming Past-President for the next year. PRA provided several Lunch & Learn webinars including Digital Accessibility, Introduction to Mental Health First Aid, VR Needs for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness, an NDEAM Employer Panel and the Annual Professional Development Institute. All of these were offered virtually via the PRA Zoom platform, and were CRCC pre-approved.

As with so many other events and conferences across the globe during the pandemic, and continuing with acting in an abundance of caution, our 2021 PDI was held virtually via the new PRA Zoom platform. Our successful start to the Lunch & Learn series afforded us with the opportunity to prepare for the virtual PDI. Our presenters, sponsors, and vendors all agreed to

participate virtually, and this was met with much support by the participants. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation was also supportive of this decision, sponsoring more staff to attend this year than in the past 5 years. Since the 2020 PDI was cancelled due to the timing and the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020, the 2021 PDI provided those presenters, sponsors, and attendees another opportunity to participate in the annual conference. PRA was thrilled to receive very positive feedback regarding the virtual PDI ranging from comments about the wonderful speakers and presenters, the knowledge shared, the networking provided at various times throughout the virtual day, the awards ceremony, the Keynotes, and finally PRA's ability to provide this all in a virtual environment.

Our Awards Committee continue to work hard on reaching out to secure nominations for various PRA Awards and PRA Student Awards, as they do each year. The 2021 PRA Student Awards were presented virtually to the award winners this year due to the virtual PDI. I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank Bonnie Bluett, Judy Pena and the entire PRA Awards Committee on their diligent, enthusiastic and hard work each year on behalf of PRA.

As with other years, our 2021 past president, Jennifer Radick, worked in partnership with the National Rehabilitation Association, and continued with our online voting system. At the last PRA Board meeting, Teresa Hearn volunteered, and was approved by the board, to fill the role of Second Vice President for 2022.

We started the first board meeting of 2022 welcoming Jennifer Radick, Jessica Hanula, Sue Soderberg, and Katie Young to the board. In addition, Seth Acosta and Janet Fiore were appointed to fill board vacancies due to resignation.

Some of the strategic plans for 2022 include continuing to provide lunch & learn educational opportunities, increasing outreach to college students in the field of rehabilitation, developing an onboarding manual for incoming board members, expanding our social media presence and outreach, and increasing our advocacy efforts. Another area of focus is increasing education surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion. We aim to facilitate open, honest discussions about intersectionality and the impact that all identities have on individuals with disabilities.

Out of an abundance of caution, the 2022 Professional Development Institute will occur virtually on our Zoom platform. It will take place on April 13th from 8am-4:30pm and we expect to offer continuing education credits (including ethics!) Registration information coming soon!

As we move into 2022, I would like to invite you to continue to check out our website, Facebook Page and other Social Media pages to see all that PRA has to offer its members and community. I echo the messages of all other PRA Presidents and invite you to join us at a board meeting—come and see the partnership, networking, strategic planning, and sense of community that comes from a room full of disability advocates from both the public and private sectors. In-person meetings hope to resume in 2022, but virtual participation will continue to be offered. The PRA is committed to the advancement of rehabilitation to promote full inclusion of people with disabilities into the mainstream of our society. The PRA believes that together, we can accomplish our goals of empowering individuals with disabilities to live full and meaningful lives—to live and work independently—to become productive members of our communities in a traditional or virtual environment.

I am honored to serve as this year's PRA President, and I am excited to see what we are able to accomplish together in 2022!

Amy L. Moore, MS, CRC
2022 PRA President