

WEEKLY FOCUS

Ohio | Opportunities for Ohioans
with Disabilities

Kevin L. Miller, Executive Director

April 4, 2014

The mission of the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency is to ensure individuals with disabilities achieve quality employment, independence and disability determination outcomes through integrated services, partnerships and innovation.

2015 Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan Public Forums Held

As noted in last week's *Weekly Focus*, the 2015 Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan Public Forums began this week. The public forums, seeking public comment and feedback on the VR State Plan for Federal Fiscal Year 2015 as required by the Rehabilitation Service Administration (RSA), started on Tuesday evening with a meeting in Columbus at the OOD Central Office. Commission Chair Jacqueline Romer-Sensky and Commissioner Blake Haxton welcomed attendees on Tuesday while BVR Deputy Director Susan Pugh led the discussion.



(back row, left to right) BVR Deputy Director Susan Pugh, Commissioner Jacqui Romer-Sensky, and Athens Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor Kristen Butts listen to a concerned parent.

Forums were also held in Athens on Wednesday and in Toledo on Thursday with forums planned in the Cleveland and Cincinnati areas next week. Commissioner Romer-Sensky again helped lead the Athens meeting and Commissioner David V. Daugherty participated in the Toledo forum. BVR Deputy Director Pugh and key regional staff also attended each forum providing guidance and noting the feedback offered.

Information about the times and locations of next week's meetings are below and on our website. The power point presentation given at the forums is also available for download here <http://ood.ohio.gov/ood-home/about-us/media-center/vr-public-forums>

- April 8, 2014: 12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Cuyahoga Community College
Corporate College East
4400 Richmond Rd. Room #229
Warrensville Heights, OH 44128
Phone: (216) 987-2800
Free Parking
- April 9, 2014: 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Butler County Educational Service Center
400 North Erie Blvd., Room A
Hamilton, OH 45011
Phone: (513) 887-5549
Free Parking

Forum attendees will be provided an overview of the VR State Plan, the strategies and tactics the agency is considering implementing in the coming year. There will also be a time for offering input and feedback on the plan and agency priorities.



BVR Deputy Director Susan Pugh (standing, right) leads the discussion at the Toledo public forum. Commissioner David V. Daugherty (sitting, far right) also attended the forum.

Fee Schedule Change Implementation

Several changes to the Vocational Rehabilitation Fee Schedule went into effect April 1. OOD conducted informational sessions with providers and VR staff through-out the first year of the fee schedule implementation and as a result determined that several modifications would enhance effectiveness.

Report Fee: OOD informed providers at the implementation of the Fee Schedule in October 2012 that the agency intended to create a standard report fee once data could be collected and analyzed. Report writing was billed in units of service to capture the amount of time spent report writing versus time providing the service. After performing the necessary analysis, OOD set a two tiered flat fee structure based on the amount providers billed us for report writing under the new Fee Schedule. Previously there was often discussion between VR staff and providers to determine an appropriate level of reporting which delayed billing and payment. The new fee structure will streamline the service requirements and billing process while removing delays in payments being released to providers.

Vocational Testing: A flat fee was also set for vocational evaluations. Prior to the rule change in 2012, approximately 85% of vocational testing was conducted in some form of flat fee (either daily, per evaluation, weekly, etc.). However, due to the different types of flat fees, OOD was not able to set a flat rate at that time. After having evaluated the authorization data, OOD was able to determine the average vocational evaluation, including report writing, and staffing and set a flat fee accordingly. This change will also eliminate discussions to determine what the appropriate amount of time for service provision is and to prevent delays of payments.

Summer Youth: Summer Youth Programs have been divided into two options, a Career Exploration Track for young students (14 – 15) and a Work Experience Track for older students (16 up to 22). The programs have also been standardized at 15 hours per week for the Career Exploration Track and 20 hours per week for the Work Experience Track. OOD will still use the same formula included in the 2012 VR Fee Schedule to determine the weekly rate so this is a no cost change to the program. Standardization of the programs better addresses the needs of younger students and simplifies the billing process.

Business Enterprise Program Grand Opening in Montgomery County

Next Thursday, April 10, a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony is planned to celebrate the Grand Opening of Café Montgomery, a newly remodeled café in the Montgomery county Administration Building in Dayton. The facility, a longstanding partnership between Montgomery County and the Business Enterprise Program (BEP), offers grab and go options, a salad bar, green/sustainable packaging products, along with several menu options such as sandwiches, Panini's, etc. for both breakfast and lunch. The cafe will proudly be serving Starbucks coffee with a full line of coffee and specialty drinks. This facility, although in a different format, opened in the administration building in 1972!

This exciting event will once again highlight the important work of the Business Enterprise program and illustrate how BEP is adapting to changing circumstances to provide quality services while creating employment and independence for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

Eligibility Wait Times Cut in Half

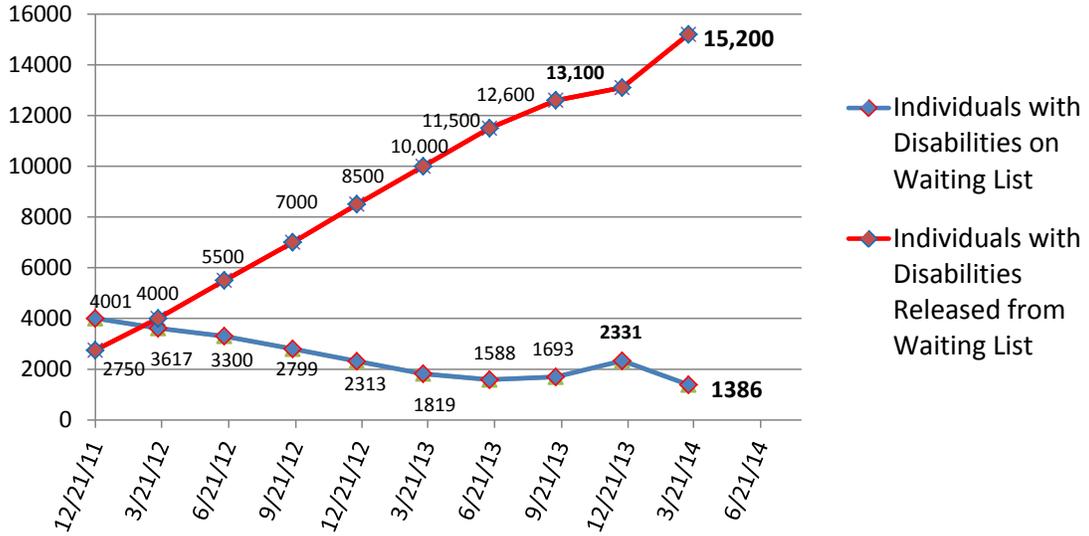
In Federal Fiscal Year 2011, a person seeking Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services waited 115 days on average to find out whether they were eligible. Individuals who received eligibility decisions in March of this year saw that wait time reduced to less than two months or 53.7 days on average. That is a 53% reduction!

While our goal remains 30 days from application to eligibility, this is significant progress and a result of a great deal of hard work on the part of staff. Recognizing the challenge involved in meeting our goal, we requested LeanOhio lead staff in a Kaizen Event to bring efficiency and increased productivity to the process.

In 2011 we were nearly double the national benchmark of 60 days; and now in FFY 2014, we are under that benchmark and continue to trend downward. Increased visibility surrounding our name change and the implementation of the Employment First initiative has resulted in a higher volume of eligibility decisions. Staff is actually processing more eligibility decisions even as they continue to reduce the wait time for those seeking our services.

Our improvements reflect the agency's commitment to delivering efficient and high quality service to those we serve and increasing successful outcomes. Thanks again to all the staff for their continued hard work in driving these improvements and making sure individuals with disabilities have quicker access to needed services. This truly makes a difference in people's lives.

Number of Individuals with Disabilities on Waiting List



For more information or questions on stories in this publication, please call the Office of Communications at 614.438.1476.

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