



# Business Enterprise Program

**Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD)** is the state agency that partners with Ohioans with disabilities to achieve quality employment, independence and Social Security disability determination outcomes. It is accomplished through its Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR), Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired (BSVI) and Division of Disability Determination (DDD). A fourth area is the Division of Employer and Innovation Services, which is responsible for establishing and maintaining partnerships with employers.

**The Business Enterprise Program (BEP)** enables Ohioans who are legally blind to have entrepreneurial careers in food service management. Today the BEP has more than 90 self-employed licensed operators managing businesses in food service and vending throughout Ohio. These opportunities include the management of cafeterias, convenience stores, snack bars and vending machines in state, federal and interstate highway rest areas, where licensed operators have priority under the Randolph Sheppard Act and Ohio Revised Code. The BEP also has businesses at state universities, colleges, county buildings and private locations.

## **OOD's Support of the Business Enterprise Program**

OOD's Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired (BSVI) is responsible for the administration and oversight of this federally funded program. The program does not rely upon state government funding for fiscal support. A monthly charge collected from BEP operators, based on individual business profits, is matched to a federal grant and used to support the investments and maintenance of the BEP. These matched funds cover the costs of the equipment and initial inventory in establishing a new business opportunity, as well as equipment repairs and other ongoing support. The individual licensed operators are supported by BEP specialists to provide business consulting services useful in business success.

## **Goals of the Business Enterprise Program**

- Establishing employment for people who have a visual impairment
- Demonstrating the capabilities and competence of individuals who are legally blind
- Providing quality food and vending services throughout Ohio

The average yearly personal income of a BEP licensed operator in Ohio is about \$42,000. Under the BEP, licensed operators are sole proprietors of their food service business. As in any other business, income to the licensed operator is tied to business profits.

In Ohio, BEP licensed operators employ more than 180 individuals, of whom many are people with disabilities. Under this model, the licensed operator is solely responsible for hiring and supervising his or her own employees.

## **Business Enterprise Training Program**

The BEP has 60 years of experience assisting in creating sustainable business success. BEP requires that prospective business owners complete a training program consisting of online and in-stand training. Instruction includes food service safety and sanitation, merchandising, customer service, management skills, BEP regulations, bookkeeping, restaurant law, equipment maintenance and first aid. In-stand training gives potential licensees actual work experience with

a licensed manager who operates their own BEP business. After training, potential licensees must pass a final exam to become licensed and then apply for a BEP facility as one becomes available.

### **Business Enterprise Program Eligibility**

- Legally blind (20/200 vision or less)
- Citizen of the United States
- At least 21 years old
- High school diploma or G.E.D.
- Math, problem-solving and communication skills
- Physical stamina
- Independent living skills
- Mobility skills
- Interpersonal skills needed in business
- Complete the training program
- Have no past-due BEP debts

For more information on the Business Enterprise Program, call: Toll-free: 877-898-0013, ext. 1278 or 614-438-1278. For more information about other BSVI programs, visit [www.ood.ohio.gov](http://www.ood.ohio.gov).

### **Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities**

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