



Welcome to HireGround!

The Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency (OOD) produces this bimonthly newsletter expressly for our VR professional audience. We hope that the stories, best practices and practical tips we share will be of use and value to you as we continue our relationship and work with participants to achieve quality employment, independence and disability determination outcomes through our mutual integrated services, partnerships and innovation. For questions, suggestions or comments on this newsletter, please contact elizabeth.sammons@ood.ohio.gov. Thank you for reading this information and sharing as appropriate.

Our next *HireGround* issue is slated to address business partnerships and best practice. If you have a success story or best practice from your work in this area, please email the HireGround coordinator above. Thanks!

Introduction:

Whether we're an entrepreneur, a counselor, or an administrator, we have a lot of business to handle on the job. Our approach will depend on many factors including our age, cultural background, belief system and capacity. This issue of *HireGround* tries to cover a few aspects of taking care of business from perspectives both inside and outside the agency context.

Not every day on the job is sunshine and fair skies. That's why we've decided to interview some leading professionals confronted with the reality of little time, heavy workloads and demanding customers; plus the need to part ways with colleagues at times. The realism with which these interviewees cover such

topics, combined with their optimism may surprise you. Meanwhile, changes in business structures for Social Security beneficiaries and for federal contractors will give you useful information to share with consumers and to use for current and future reference.

Opportunities!

Screen Reader Just Made Free to Windows Users

Window-Eyes, a screen reader similar to JAWS in its functioning, is now available to users of Microsoft Office at no cost. Window-Eyes gives people who are blind, visually impaired, or print disabled full access to Windows PCs by making the computer accessible via speech and/or Braille. <http://www.afb.org/community.aspx?AnnouncementID=1636>

Normally priced from \$800-1,000, the program is now available to anyone with an

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

A Fine Line: Running a Business and Balancing Abilities.....p. 2
Section 503: What Does it Mean for Business and the VR Communityp. 4
Social Security Discontinuing Some Field Office Services; Expanding Online Services.....p. 5
Perspectives from the Fieldp. 7
At Your Fingertipsp. 8
Calendarp. 10

active license using Microsoft Office 2010 or higher. Customers are able to download a full version of Window-Eyes at www.WindowEyesForOffice.com. The website provides download instructions as well as additional details about this offer.

Many questions concerning Window-Eyes can be answered by the Frequently Asked Questions at www.windoweyesforoffice.com.

Free Master's Degree in Orientation and Mobility, Northern Illinois University (NIU), Application Deadline - March 15. If you are currently certified as a Teacher of Students with Visual Disabilities (TVI) or as a Vision Rehabilitation Therapist (VRT), this program is a one-time opportunity designed to enable you to earn credentials in Orientation and Mobility.

The summers-only program will allow you to obtain a master's degree and certification in Orientation & Mobility (or just certification, if you prefer) without an interruption in employment. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity includes full tuition, fees and an \$800 per summer stipend. On campus courses will take place summers of 2014, 2015 and 2016. A full time, twelve-week internship will be completed during the summer of 2017 at any approved site in the contiguous 48 states. This package is worth \$16,000 for Illinois residents; \$25,000 for out-of-state students. This is a one-time opportunity based on federal funding.

For more information about this program, please contact the NIU Director of Orientation and Mobility, Jodi Sticken, at jsticken@niu.edu. Be sure to notify Gaylen Kapperman at gkapperman@niu.edu of your intent to apply as soon as the decision is made to ensure that your name is included in the pool of candidates.

For additional information on the NIU Visual Disabilities Program, please visit: www.vision.niu.edu. For online Graduate School application, please visit the NIU Graduate School Admissions website: http://www.grad.niu.edu/grad/apply/degree_seeking.shtml.

Other supporting documents (transcripts, official GRE scores, letters of recommendation, and copies of certificates) may be submitted after the actual application.

Upcoming ORA Annual Conference

The Ohio Rehabilitation Association (ORA), a chapter of the National Rehabilitation Association will hold its 60th Anniversary Training Conference May 15-17. The event will take place in Columbus at the beautiful North Pointe Conference Center.

Make plans now to attend this special ORA event celebrating generations of supporting rehabilitation professionals and advocating for people with disabilities. As always, a variety of interesting seminars with C.E.U.'s will be available, along with glorious networking opportunities.

Conference details and registration information are available on the ORA website at <http://www.ohiorehab.org/ora%20conference.html>.

Help at FAFSA Time!

All college students needing financial support including OOD participants must apply for financial aid by submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). February 9 is Ohio's College Goal Sunday with free assistance for students and families. For registration and locations around Ohio, see: <http://www.ohiocollegegoalsunday.org/locations.html>.

For 7 Things You Need Before You Fill Out the FAFSA, go to: <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2013/12/7-things-you-need-before-you-fill-out-the-fafsa/>.

For 6 Steps to Filling Out the FAFSA, go to: <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2014/01/6-steps-to-filling-out-the-fafsa/>.

A Fine Line: Running a Business and Balancing Abilities

(Editor's note: After working for others in the food business for eight years, Laura Kolb began managing facilities in OOD's Business Enterprise (BE) Program in 2004. Here are some thoughts she has as a business owner and also as someone who believes in coaching employees facing different barriers along the road.)

“When I was an employee, I was able to see how other visually impaired people accomplished tasks that a sighted person might do differently,” Kolb recalls. “It comes down to being extra diligent and organized, and that’s a skill I learned from other visually impaired business owners. I feel like there isn’t a better type of person to work with people with disabilities than another person who has a disability.”

For the last two years, Kolb has managed a fast-paced cafeteria at Columbus’ 41-story Rhodes State Office Tower. “Regardless of what level you’re working with people, it’s important to maintain a positive attitude and never give up on anyone, even if it means that you’re not the right person to work with that person,” she explains regarding the stress of personnel issues. “You want to be compassionate. There’s a fine line, though. A lot of people are depending on me to make a profit from my business, to get equipment, to pay employees, to run our whole program even the staff of Business Enterprise. A lot of other people are counting on us.”

Several interns taking a second senior year at the Ohio State School for the Blind work in Kolb’s cafeteria four half days a week. Kolb explains to job coaches what needs to be accomplished, including creating new activities to challenge these high schoolers or modifying tasks according to their abilities. Many students learn responsibility and put it into practice. On the day of this interview, all four called in to announce that school had been cancelled and as a result, they would not be able to come to work. “Obviously I knew they weren’t coming, but that was a very big step,” she noted as the teens’ professionalism grows.

Kolb directs a bit of coaching on the job to employees both with and without disabilities. Thinking it through, she explains. “There’s no perfect employee. Everybody has weaknesses. I remind myself I could not run my business without these people and I owe them the courtesy of treating them respectfully and professionally. If somebody has a disability, the manner in working with them that’s most different is helping the other employees

understand their disability and what limitations they might have, or what they might need to know differently. I’m fine with them not having experienced it, and not understanding it, but if they aren’t ok with learning to be open that would definitely be a strike against them for employment.”

At various times, she has had to fire staff. “It’s a very fine line between ‘Is this a reasonable accommodation?’ and ‘Does this person need to be fired because of either their inability to adapt to their disability, or maybe it’s the wrong fit for a job for them?’”

At her first facility, someone Kolb trusted was using the freight elevator to pilfer food. “I took it all so personally as a person with a disability. But I’ve got a sighted friend who owns a deli, and they’ve fired so many people for stealing. It was a learning curve for me that I wish I had been better prepared for,” she recalls.

A second firing difficult for Kolb came when she had to let a consumer go the fourth day she was on her own following two weeks with a job coach. Kolb stresses the importance of making sure

people learn the skills they need on the job and become independent. “They created a failure for her in a way,” she reflects.

Interns don’t always work out either, since some of them seem to consider working without pay a fake job and express negative attitudes to customers. This was the case with one intern last year. Kolb recalls their parting conversation. “I said ‘If you think you’re entitled to everything, you’ll end up with nothing.’ Maybe someday he’ll think back on that conversation and say ‘oh, yeah’, because he was capable.”



Laura Kolb

But overall, a decade of running her own business has left Kolb still voicing optimism and humor. "It is human nature to want to be successful and want to be useful. When it appears that a person with disabilities is not, many times it's because they have given up. They've been set up for so many failures, or people constantly are trying to do everything for them. I try to thank them at the end of the day; to end every day on a positive note, even though that's not possible to do a hundred percent of the time, trust me!"

Section 503: What Does it Mean for Business and the VR Community?

Last August, the U.S. Department of Labor announced a Final Rule changing regulations implementing Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. "We had reasonable accommodation, but reasonable accommodation alone doesn't always get people in the door, so we're adding a piece that's more quota-like for the first time in some sense," says L. Scott Lissner, ADA Coordinator and 504 Compliance Officer, The Ohio State University. "The original proposal for this was not an aspirational goal, but a more solid requirement."



L. Scott Lissner

In the final rule, a seven percent disability hiring and retention rate across all levels is indeed at the status of aspirational goal. But Lissner explains that like many other government aims, these words have a punch. "It is a reporting target. There will be some requirements to collect data, produce it, demonstrate that you're making reasonable efforts to recruit qualified people with disabilities, and that your hiring practices are across the board, not all entry level or all a particular class of

jobs." According to Lissner, "They're going to collect data for three years, and if we're not reasonably denting the problem, there will be 'non-aspirational targets.'"

Starting in March 2014, disability questions will become a new category as part of annual reporting, applying to contractors with a federal contract or subcontract of \$50,000 or more and 50 or more employees. Said contractors must document and update several quantitative comparisons for the number of people with disabilities who apply for jobs and how many they hire. As the government sees it, having this data will assist contractors in measuring the effectiveness of their disability outreach and recruitment efforts, as well as providing hard data not previously available on the disability employment picture.

Both current employees and applicants will be asked for voluntary disability disclosure. Employees will receive disclosure requests every five years on an ongoing basis once the initial request is put out.

Lissner views the new disability questions as a positive step. "You wouldn't be obligated to accommodate someone, because they said 'yes' to this question, for this purpose. You would still have a separate reasonable accommodation process that might ask for evidence of the need for accommodation." However, "There is a reminder of your obligation as an employer to provide reasonable accommodations to people who request them. So there's a reinforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). I think that we'll see requests for accommodations go up. This will make people more knowledgeable that accommodations are possible."

Lissner lists "refusal, resistance and hesitation" to make recommendation requests right now as the major reasons why some employees with disabilities never leave the lower echelons of the job front to utilize their full potential. As a result, some employees are far less productive than they could be. Supervisors may mark performance to factors outside the disability realm without realizing that many issues can be taken care of through flexibility or accommodations that are simply never put on the table as an option.

These new reporting requirements offer two expanded options to the vocational rehabilitation (VR) community. First, VR professionals should get a grasp on what major federal contractors or sub-contractors are in their area, since this knowledge creates opportunities for outreach and dialogue. "One of the things that is in 503 is that how you advertise and recruit has to be documented," Lissner says. This may mean that many more employers will turn to the VR community to target applicants. "You have to reach out to that population. Saying 'If we work together and do this well, you'll never have a quota and only have an aspirational goal and be happy with your workforce' is how I might sell it to the contractor who isn't sure about the idea."

Second, counselors may find the regulations a means of encouraging disclosure as a positive benefitting consumers, overriding the fear of reprisal or discrimination. Lissner sums it up this way; "I think that the way that they'll require disclosure will make it more obvious that I can ask for reasonable accommodations as an employee of this company. That's not always as clear to people in companies as I might want it to be. When people disclose and get the accommodations they need, there's no reason to expect that people with disabilities wouldn't be promoted at the same rate as everybody else."

How are the Feds Stacking Up Here?

According to the *"Employing People with Disabilities in the Federal Executive Branch"* U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) report, more people with disabilities are working in Federal service both in real terms and by percentage than ever in the past 32 years. By the end of FY 2012, total permanent federal employment for people with disabilities had increased from 203,694 in FY 2011 to 219,975, an increase from 10.97 to 11.89 percent. New disability hires totaled 16,653, representing an increase from 14.65 percent in FY 2011 to 16.31 percent in FY 2012. Since 2010, new disability hires have reached over 50,000, more than half of the 100,000 goal President Obama set in 2010 to realize by 2015.

However, the report also highlights a need to hire people with disabilities at more senior levels. Less than ten percent of permanent employees in Senior Executive Service and General Schedule 13 or higher positions have disclosed disabilities. According to the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), a centralized accommodation fund and government-wide accommodation standards could help federal recruiters and managers do even better. Additional disability-related training for hiring managers, especially on Schedule A hiring authority, which allows agencies to hire people with disabilities outside of the customary process, could also help improve onboarding rates.

For more information and to read the report, see: <http://www.opm.gov/news/releases/2013/12/opm-details-great-strides-in-hiring-people-with-disabilities/>.

This federal search tool covers currently enrolled employers and federal contractors in E-Verify: <http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify/about-program/e-verify-employers-search-tool>

For an overview of U.S. Department of Labor - OFCCP - Section 503, see: <http://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/section503.htm>. This includes: Final Rule, Fact Sheet, Frequently Asked Questions, Side-by-Side Chart of changes in the regulations and public Webinar.

HR and Employment Law News August 28, 2013: OFCCP Issues New Section 503 Disability Regulations: Changing the Rules for Federal Government Contractors: <http://hr.blr.com/HR-news/Discrimination/Affirmative-Action/OFCCP-issues-new-section-503-disability-regulation>.

For additional details on the New Disability and Veterans Regulations for Federal Contractors, see: Fred W. Alvarez et al., United States: Expanding Compliance Obligations: What Federal Contractors Need to Know About OFCCP's New Disability and Veterans Regulations, Mondaq, October 18, 2013. <http://www.mondaq.com/unitedstates/x/269904/Government+Contracts+Procurement+PPP/Expanding+Compliance+Obligations+What+Federal+Contractors+Need+To+Know+About+OFCCPs+New+Disability+And+Veterans+Regulations>

Social Security Discontinuing Some Field Office Services; Expanding Online Services

Starting in February or soon thereafter, Social Security beneficiaries will no longer be able to request a benefit verification letter or a Social Security number printout in local Social Security Administration (SSA) field offices. However, offices can still help when people need a replacement card. Field offices will process this Application (Form SS-5) as long as people provide the supporting documentation needed. This form may also be completed and mailed with original supporting documents to the address provided on the form.

Meanwhile, the SSA has expanded services available with the My Social Security portal. To begin this process, beneficiaries need to provide some personal information to the secure website: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount/>.

People who receive Social Security benefits including SSI are now usually able to request and receive benefit verification letters online right away. Use a My Social Security online account to:

- Get benefit verification letter;
- Check benefit and payment information and earnings record;
- Change address and phone number;
- Start or change direct deposit of benefit payments;
- Receive Social Security Statement;
- Review estimates of retirement, disability, and survivor's benefits; and
- View estimated Social Security and Medicare taxes paid into the system.

Social Security is asking agencies and other organizations that routinely request these verifications to use the agency's specially developed online methods. This information is available in real-time or overnight using online government services such as E-Verify and Social Security's Business Services Online. VR professionals may work alongside beneficiaries online to gain access to this information with the consent of claimants.

But even with better online technology, SSA recognizes that some claimants with disabilities may not be able to complete online forms or have access to a computer to submit their disability benefit application. Further, SSA recognizes that the online forms do not check for accuracy of information or errors that may delay the application or lead to denial of a claim. An alternate means of getting benefits verifications is to call SSA at 800. 772. 1213 voice or 800. 325. 0778 TTY.

For business portals and services VR professionals may utilize, see: <http://www.ssa.gov/hrm/>.

For a fact sheet on documents needed to get a new Social Security card, see: [www.ssa.gov/thirdparty/factsheets_posters/Numithirdparties\(2014\).pdf](http://www.ssa.gov/thirdparty/factsheets_posters/Numithirdparties(2014).pdf).

Wisdom from the Desk of James Gears

Provider Enrollment:

OOD will be conducting a provider enrollment period from February 1-28. Both current and new providers will all be required to enroll again. Providers will have an opportunity to make changes to their Provider Agreements and Addendums. VR will be holding two informational sessions on January 31 from 9:30 - 11:30 am and 1:30 - 3:30 pm via GoToMeeting. The link will be sent out to providers on Monday, January 27. Providers will need to register for the training. Each provider should only register one person for the training session, keeping in mind that multiple people may listen in at the same location. Enrollment will be on a first-come, first-serve basis.



James Gears

The enrollment process itself will be completed online. The link will be sent to the person who registers for the January 31 training. If

your organization has not received a login by February 3, you should contact *crpvendor@ood.ohio.gov* and use the Subject Line “Provider Login” in order to receive a quick response.

Fee Schedule Update:

The revised Fee Schedule has passed through the Common Sense Initiative (CSI) with no recommendations. It has now been filed with the Joint Commission on Administrative Rule Review (JCARR). There will be another public meeting scheduled by OOD in the near future before the final JCARR hearing. Stay tuned, we will post notification of the meeting via the community rehabilitation programs email distribution list and on OOD’s website. Policy updates will go into effect on April 1.

Perspectives from the Field: How Katie Karwatske & Tanya Lewinski Are “Takin’ Care of Business,” Part I

Katie Karwatske fell in love with rehabilitation during her first day of an introductory class on the subject at Ohio University while studying mental health. “It was probably the best mistake I ever made,” she says. Since 2004 she has worked with both BVR and BSVI consumers through the Portsmouth office, embedded since 2006 at the Chillicothe One-Stop.

Here’s what Karwatski and Tanya Lewinski have to say about taking care of the real business of VR.

HG (HireGround): What is good consumer service? What does that mean to you for people?

KK (Katie Karwatske): I really try to be respectful. Sometimes I can’t tell them what they’re hoping to hear, but I want to be courteous. I try to communicate



Katie Karwatske

that I’m sincerely listening to what they say. How would I feel if I were in their shoes?

TL (Tanya Lewinski):

For me, it really means listening to the consumer. For a lot of people with disabilities, their voice hasn’t been heard, especially dealing with transition youth. In some ways, I’m the first person who listens to their goals and aspirations, to what direction they



Tanya Lewinski

want to go. Then I deliver the best services I can to help them get to that place of employment. A part of my job that I really like is giving people the hope and the power to let them know that they can succeed, and they can believe that.

HG: What are the toughest things you face when you try to give this top-notch service?

KK: For me, it’s time restraints, and paperwork and the administrative demands of the job. This agency is kind of a moving target, and it’s hard to make sure that you’re giving the same message every time.

HG: You have a lot of demands on your time. How do you balance those as professionals?

TL: The first thing that I thought of was ‘My calendar!’ There’s a lot of time management skill that goes into this job. I try to schedule one day a week in the office when I don’t have any meetings, just to get caught up on paperwork. And I schedule one day a month when I can just call consumers and give them that touch. I find if I don’t do that, I get lost.

KK: The first thought that came to my head was ‘Not very well.’ It always feels to me personally, at the end of the day I have more things on my plate than I get done. But one guideline that I try to use is, ‘What is going to most benefit the consumers that I serve?’

HG: How do you keep your finger on who’s hiring and how do you talk with businesses?

TL: I keep learning. I attended a Disability Rights Ohio training in December, and there's a push and we want to have seven percent of the workforce as people with disabilities. But the first thing I thought of was 'Well, people with disabilities don't know that that employer needs seven percent of their workforce to be people with disabilities.' I think there's a discrepancy in the information that gets passed down on things like legislation for someone with a disability, and they need to learn these things, too.

KK: Get a relationship established with the manager, or a local person that does hiring, even if it's for a state or corporate company. It's really, really helpful when you can get that one person on the management team to hear you, and to know what you do and to find value in it. You're building a relationship and an ally in that employer.

HG: OK, not to make you brag, but I have to ask. What do you think sets your work apart and earning the 100% customer satisfaction rate?

TL: If you genuinely believe when you meet a consumer that they can be employed, and that's where your heart is, then you carry that through. If you focus on the negative aspects of 'This person's going to have a difficult time,' you run into a hole. At the job, we have a positive work culture. We're really open with the way we feel. There's a lot of conflict on the job, and we face that with open arms, and we get through that. I think the key to being a good coordinator or counselor is resilience.

KK: You can get sucked down by the negative, but I just have to bring myself back to why I felt called to come into this type of work. I really believe in treating others the way I'd want to be treated. It takes a lot of work and practice, but I do daily make the effort. Sometimes I just feel empowered that I believe I can make a difference, not because I'm extra special, but just that belief, and that we do have that power to help somebody.

Stay tuned to our next *HireGround* for a few more words of wisdom from these contributors.

(Editor's note: When OOD customer surveys were sent out last year, both Karwatske and

Lewinski received 100% satisfaction scores from participants.

Lewinski has been in the disability field since 2007, including managing an intermediate care facility and several vocational training sites. Currently she serves as a VRP3 coordinator in Hattie Larlham in Akron. <http://www.hattielarlham.org/>

From the Desk of Steve Tribbie: Cost Allocation Plans

Nearly all partners readily engage in some type of allocation of resources. One common issue identified during audits is the lack of a formal Cost Allocation Plan. Many of OOD's partners receive funding from multiple sources – ranging from federal and state grants, to local levies, to private bequests and donations. In these situations, partners allocate portions of their human and material resources to the programs and projects supported by each funding source.



Steve Tribbie

This common and effective business practice is not only encouraged by federal accounting guidelines, it is often required when multiple funding sources are involved. Partners must maintain a current Cost Allocation Plan describing the method by which resources (costs) are allocated. This plan demonstrates to OOD that the correct portion of costs is being charged to the contract and that the method of allocating costs is consistent among all funding sources. Adhering to a current Cost Allocation Plan demonstrates that the partner is maintaining effective oversight and control of expenditures under the contract.

At Your Fingertips: A Few Additional Resources and Features

For great tips and details on applying for federal government jobs read **"Getting the Most Out of USAJOBS"** at <http://usodep.blogs.govdelivery.com/2011/03/14/getting-the-most-out-of-usajobs/>.

See: Tips for Applying for DOT Jobs Non-Competitively as a Person with a Severe Disability; Sample Schedule A Letters; Tips for Writing a Federal Resume; Navigating USAJOBS (OPM Video); and more at <http://www.dot.gov/drc/employment-people-disabilities>.

This enhanced **Ohio Means Jobs** site offers tools for career exploration, career search, financial planning, college exploration and good regional labor market data. <https://jobseeker.ohiomeansjobs.monster.com/>.

Thesetwolinksprovideregionalreportsonlabor statistics and trends by region: <http://ohiolmi.com/asp/omj/hw.htm> and <http://jfs.ohio.gov/owd/OMJResources/JobPostingsTrends.stm>

The American Association on Health and Disability has released a technical assistance guide as part of the National Disability Navigator Resource Collaborative (NDNRC). The **"Guide to Disability for Healthcare Insurance Marketplace Navigators"** is designed to inform enrollment specialists about special considerations for people with disabilities as they shop for healthcare coverage. http://power.aapd.com/site/R?i=0nNkKWOJVV4_VOYAWhBM6Q

A new research brief of **Pepnet 2** compiles data from nationwide research projects about the employment characteristics of deaf adults, revealing the following:

- * Deaf adults are employed at higher rates than their peers with other types of disabilities.
- * Deaf individuals' career advancement continually lags behind their hearing peers and young deaf adults are often less likely to feel that they have many chances to work their way up, receive promotions, or

take on greater responsibility.

- * About half (49%) of deaf adults age 21-65 are employed, compared with 71% of the general population.

To access the complete Research Brief, click here: <http://www.pepnet.org/research/researchbriefs>.

Results from the Federal Partners in Transition National Online Dialogue are now available in the report **"Federal Partners in Transition National Online Dialogue: Participation Metrics"** http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&ct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCsQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fftp.epolicyworks.ideascale.com%2Fcommunity-library%2Faccounts%2F90%2F909643%2FFPT-National-Dialogue-Metrics-Report_September-2013-FINAL-a.pdf&ei=Cy3hUqe5GqKTyQG8ICABw&usg=AFQjCNGhtOOG-MzlyGx8xDiXFZE6srHTCQ&bvm=bv.59930103,d.aWc (PDF). Released on behalf of the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, Health and Human Services, and the Social Security Administration, the report summarizes the results of public ideas and comments about federal legislative and regulatory barriers and their effects on efforts to improve transition outcomes for youth with disabilities.

2013 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium provides disability prevalence and other useful disability statistics on workforce etc. for the United States. <http://www.disabilitycompendium.org/compendium-statistics>

More High Schools to Team Up with Employers and get an early in on college tracks. <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2013/11/more-high-schools-to-team-up-with-employers/>

New Publications

"Final Report Released: Employment, Earnings, and Primary Impairments Among Benefits of Social Security Disability Programs" <http://www.researchondisability.org/news-features/2014/01/07/final-report-released-employment-earnings-and-primary-impairments-among-benefits-of-social-security-disability-programs>

"New Working Paper Released on Return-to-Work Outcomes Among SSDI Beneficiaries"
<<http://researchondisability.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=767afbe8bd6db50de03889b40&id=3582e68194&e=23b848c4e2>>

This website details special circumstances, including changes in work status that allow beneficiaries to make changes outside the general enrollment period for **Medicare Advantage or Part D**. <http://www.medicare.gov/sign-up-change-plans/when-can-i-join-a-health-or-drug-plan/special-circumstances/join-plan-special-circumstances.html>

This pithy blog offers information and referral to a free, six-module tool kit called **"Skills to Pay the Bills: Preparing Young People for the World of Work."** <http://usodep.blogs.govdelivery.com/2013/12/18/skills-to-pay-the-bills-preparing-young-people-for-the-world-of-work/>

Work Opportunity Tax Credit Video highlights Federal tax credits ranging from \$1,200 to \$9,600, for employers hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. <http://youtu.be/2qSupgm5lBM>

See this updated seven module online course, **"Successful Placement of the Older Consumer with Visual Impairment."** VR counselors can learn how to assist older consumers with visual impairments to achieve their employment goals. CEUs and CRC hours can be earned through completing the modules. For more information, see: <http://www.blind.msstate.edu/training/training/older-consumer/>.

From the creators of Ohio Means Jobs comes **Ohio Means Internships**. There are more than 1,000 opportunities already online around the state. <http://www.ohiomeansinternships.com>

Check out the **Spectronics Blog; Inclusive Learning and Advancing Independent Achievement through Technology**. <http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/blog/>

Calendar

February 19-22 – **Learning Disabilities Association 51st Annual International Conference**, Disneyland Resort, Anaheim, CA, <http://www.ldanatl.org/conference/>

February 28 – **2014 3rd Annual African American Symposium on Disabilities**, Desert Willow Conference Center, Phoenix, AZ, <http://www.abledata.com/abledata.cfm?ksectionid=19326&pageid=86154&conferenceid=212333>

March 13-15 – **People First Ohio 2014 Conference**, "Advocacy," The Time for Change is Now!, Roberts Convention Centre, Wilmington, OH, <http://www.peoplefirstohio.org/>

March 17-22 – **29th Annual International Technology and Persons with Disabilities Conference**, Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel, San Diego, CA, presented by CSUN, <http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2014/sessions/>

March 24-25 – Ohio Disability and Health Program is hosting a **Healthy Lifestyles for People with Disabilities, Train-the-Trainer Workshop** at The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, <http://www.nisonger.osu.edu/odhp>

April 4-6 – **SIBS Looking Forward: Transition Retreat**, for students with disabilities ages 17-22 and their siblings ages 15-25, YMCA Camp Wilson, Bellefontaine, OH. Contact thomas.fish@osumc.edu or sahall@ashland.edu for more information or to register. Video from last year's retreat: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vC-6hUh2w9Y>

April 7-9 – **2014 Disability Policy Seminar**, Grand Hyatt, Washington, DC, <http://www.disabilitypolicyseminar.org/>

April 8-9 – **State-of-the-Science Conference: Advancing Evidence-Based Practices and Policies to Close the Employment Gap**, Hyatt Regency, Bethesda, MD, <http://www.researchondisability.org/epm-rrtc/events-view/2014/01/13/state-of-the-science-conference-advancing-evidence-based-practices-and-policies-to-close-the-employment-gap>

April 9-12 – **Council for Exceptional Children Annual Convention and Expo**, Philadelphia, PA, <http://www.cec.sped.org>

June 23-26 – **138th American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Annual Meeting**, Embracing Complexity: Inclusion, Participation and Citizenship; Orlando, FL, <http://aaidd.org/education/annual-conference/schedule-at-a-glance>

July 1-5 – **52nd Biennial National Association of the Deaf Conference**, Atlanta Hilton Downtown, Atlanta, GA. Early-bird deadline to register is March 31. <http://nad.org/sites/all/modules/civicrm/extern/url.php?u=19344&qid=2455172>

July 1-6 – **National Federation of the Blind National Convention 2014**, Rosen Centre Hotel, Orlando, FL, <https://nfb.org/national-convention>

July 11-19 – **53rd American Council of the Blind Conference and Convention**, Riviera Casino and Hotel, Las Vegas, NV, <http://acb.org/node/a487>

Thanks and so long for now:

I want to thank each person interviewed for these articles, all of whom voluntarily gave of their time and wisdom. For any comments, future article suggestions, announcements, etc., please contact me by email at elizabeth.sammons@ood.ohio.gov.

Elizabeth L. Sammons
HireGround Coordinator

Interviewees and authors:

Katherin Karwatske

Laura Kolb

Tanya Lewinski

L. Scott Lissner

OOD contributors:

Louise Czatt

Greg Dormer

James Gears

Brigid Krane

Steve Tribbie