



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 (EIS), 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. 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 and county buildings.

BEP: A Self-Employment Program - The average annual personal income of a BEP licensed operator in Ohio is about \$43,000. Under the BEP, licensed operators are sole proprietors of their food service business. Ohio BEP licensed operators employ more than 180 individuals, of whom many are people with disabilities. The licensed operator is solely responsible for hiring and supervising his or her own employees. These self-employed individuals who are blind or visually impaired are a contributing part of the statewide workforce.

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

BEP Training - The BEP has 60 years of experience assisting in creating sustainable business success. The program requires that prospective business owners complete a training program consisting of online and in-stand training. After training, potential licensees must pass a final exam to become licensed and then apply for a BEP facility as one becomes available.

BEP Support - The BEP does not rely upon state government funding for support. A monthly charge collected from BEP operators, based on individual business profits, is matched to a federal grant and used to support and reinvest into creating new business opportunities. Licensed operators are supported by BEP specialists who provide business consulting services useful in business success.

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.

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities

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