



Department of
Higher Education

John R. Kasich, Governor
John Carey, Chancellor



Opportunities for Ohioans
with Disabilities

John R. Kasich, Governor
Kevin L. Miller, Executive Director

News Release

Ohio Department of Higher Education Contact:

Jeff Robinson
Office: 614.752.9487
Email: jrobinson@highered.ohio.gov

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Contact:

Pam Prosser
Office: 614.438.1476
Email: pam.prosser@ood.ohio.gov

Pilot program offers literacy training for people with visual impairments

Two Ohio government agencies are working together to provide literacy training for adults with visual impairments to help them prepare for employment and further their education.

The Ohio Department of Higher Education's (ODHE) Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) program is collaborating with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities' (OOD) Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired (BSVI) to fund grants to recruit students into basic Braille literacy classes that lead to high school diplomas and certifications. The goal this year is to have trained Braille literacy instructors to recruit students and teach Braille basics courses regionally.

Beginning this spring, a pilot program will be launched at the Cleveland Sight Center to address this important mission. The Cleveland Sight Center has been providing Braille instruction throughout its 110-year history to children, adolescents, and adults who are blind or visually impaired. The ABLE teachers work alongside the Braille instructor to help the students meet their education and employment goals.

"Our goal is to develop a more active role for ABLE teachers in the Braille literacy class so more adults with visual impairments can enjoy the freedoms that literacy and employment can bring about," said ODHE Senior Vice Chancellor Gary Cates, who added that ODHE and OOD would like to expand the program to other regions of the state later this year.

"Education is important to every citizen," said OOD Director Kevin Miller. "From the passage of the Workforce Integration Task Force (WIT) and implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act passage in 2014, OOD has focused on creating access points for individuals with disabilities. We're diligent in seeking ways to implement WIT recommendations to make the programs and training services more readily available to individuals who are blind, deaf, and deafblind."

In Ohio, there are approximately 132,000 working-age adults with serious visual impairment, which contributes to a high unemployment rate among the group. OOD and ODHE officials agree that illiteracy is a barrier to employment and social integration in the blindness community.

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