

WEEKLY FOCUS

Ohio | Opportunities for Ohioans
with Disabilities

Kevin L. Miller, Executive Director

February 6, 2015

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

InfoCision: Champion of Opportunity



InfoCision CEO Craig Taylor and OOD Executive Director Kevin L. Miller.

This week I was privileged to travel to Akron to present InfoCision Management Corporation (InfoCision) with our Champion of Opportunity Award. InfoCision, an Akron-based marketing company, is an industry leader that has been recognized with numerous awards for both the quality of their services and as one of the best places to work in Northeast Ohio.

Their commitment to inclusion and opportunity comes from understanding that Ohioans with disabilities have the skills and capabilities to meet their critical workforce needs and position the company to excel in a highly competitive marketplace. At InfoCision, they strive to provide individuals with disabilities more than just a job, they offer the opportunity for a career.

InfoCision's Chief of Staff Steve Brubaker, was a member of last year's Workforce Integration Task Force, which I co-chaired with Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Director Cynthia Dungey. The workforce focused on breaking down barriers to employment and income parity for Ohioans who are deaf, blind, and deafblind. During the work of the task

force, InfoCision's commitment to, and experience building a diverse and inclusive workforce was a great resource. Mr. Brubaker's individual contribution to the task force was also greatly appreciated.

InfoCision is another great example of how integrating individuals with disabilities into the workforce can strengthen Ohio's economy and its communities as well as contributing to the company's bottom line.

Congratulations again to InfoCision for this well-deserved award and thank you for the warm welcome on Wednesday.



From top row left to right: InfoCision CEO Craig Taylor, OOD Executive Director Kevin L. Miller, and OOD Commissioner Vice-Chair Jack Licate. From middle row left to right: OOD BVR Assistant Deputy Director Darin McCoy, OOD Assistant Executive Director Bill Bishilany, OOD Business Relations Manager Jon Hackathorn, InfoCision Chief of Staff Steve Brubaker, and InfoCision Director of Human Resources Brian Feisthamel. From bottom row left to right: OOD NE Area Manager Traci Conkling, and OOD Business Sourcing Analyst Susan Krejci.

Biennial Budget – Executive Proposal Released

On Monday, Governor John R. Kasich announced the details of his executive budget recommendations, often referred to as the “blue book,” for state fiscal years 2016-2017. The Executive Budget, Blueprint for a New Ohio (<http://obm.ohio.gov/Budget/operating/fy16-17.aspx>), outlines the Governor’s vision for state government and a plan to “help more Ohioans share in our economic success and ensure we continue building a strong job-friendly climate.” The recommendations position state agencies to “pursue transformational policies that create more opportunities for each and every Ohioan.”

OOD’s budget recommendations were included in the executive proposal and I wanted to share with you the priority policies that are included. I am pleased to note that **the Executive Budget includes an increase in funding for OOD.**

It is important to note, however, that it is only through the hard work and progress of the last four years that we are in a position to see an increase in our funding. We, along with our partners across the state, have worked hard to identify and implement efficiencies aimed at improving outcomes based on data driven metrics. In other words, we found ways to serve more people, more effectively and at a lower cost.

The resulting improvements have allowed us to eliminate the waiting list for individuals with Significant Disabilities (SD) and begin serving Ohioans in the lowest category (those designated with a Disability or “D”) for the first time since 1991. In fact, we are in a position to eliminate the D waiting list next week! During the last two years we have also increased successful employment outcomes by 30% and increased the number of new job plans written by almost 20%. It is this track record that has positioned OOD to receive the resources we need to build on these successes and have an even bigger impact on Ohioans with disabilities in the next biennium.

2016-2017 OOD Budget Initiatives:

- **Employment First:** Our partnership with the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) has been such a success, that we have already seen expansion this Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) with eight additional counselors now in place. The Executive Budget proposal includes a \$300,000 increase in funding for the Employment First partnership, so we can build on this success and help even more individuals achieve integrated community employment.
- **Transition Services Partnership with the Ohio Department of Education (ODE):** We are launching a transition services partnership with the Department of Education. This project, modeled on the Employment First partnership, is

designed to assist students in meeting the “fourth pathway to graduation” requirements and attain a recognized credential. The details will be worked out in collaboration with ODE and our service partners. This program will involve embedded OOD counselors in targeted school districts and ongoing collaboration with ODE, on how best to assist students with disabilities in reaching their career goals. The executive proposal includes \$5 million in each year of the biennium (included in the ODE budget) for this exciting partnership (\$2.5 million for OOD and \$2.5 million for ODE).

- **Vocational Rehabilitation Self Service Portal:** Given the transportation and other access challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, we have long discussed better leveraging technology to provide quicker and more effective services to more Ohioans. The executive proposal increases our state General Revenue Fund (GRF) match funding by \$500,000 each year in order to fund the development of a vocational rehabilitation portal, including a web-based self-service application. This will “increase access to OOD employment assistance for Ohioans with disabilities” and support the resulting increase in individuals being served by the agency.
- **Business Enterprise (BE) Program Capital Improvements:** The executive proposal includes increased appropriation authority for the BE program to fund capital improvements to facilities (this does not require additional GRF funds). This will allow the program to continue to modernize and provide better service to customers and increased opportunities for licensed operators, in a changing retail and food services landscape.

I am excited about the opportunities this budget proposal represents for our agency. Under the Governor’s leadership we are breaking down barriers and working with partners at the state and local level to provide opportunities for Ohioans to participate in the economy, strengthen their communities, and provide a better life for themselves and their families.

Keep in mind, however, that this is just the start of the process and a lot can change as the budget moves forward. Legislative language in the form of a bill will be introduced next week. After debate and discussion in both the Ohio House of Representatives and the Ohio Senate, in committees and on the floor, the Governor will need to sign the bill by the end of the State Fiscal Year on June 30.

We will strive to keep you informed as this process continues. Look for opportunities to learn more about the budget and its impact in future issues of the *Weekly Focus*.

VR Invoice Green Belt Project

On Monday, several OOD employees reported on their LeanOhio project to Senior Staff. Budget Analyst Supervisor Maria Seaman, BVR Assistant Deputy Director Darin McCoy, VR Program Specialist Alissa Otani-Cole, Account Examiner Donna Rhoads, and Program Administrator Vicki Smith were assigned the project to develop a standardized and efficient VR Invoicing process. The goal of this project was to have a timely and accurate processing of payments, a standardization of the billing process, and to maximize available dollars in the budget. The team utilized their lean skills to collaborate with Subject Matter Experts, represented by internal and contracts staff across the state. The result of these efforts is an updated procedure. The team will pilot an updated procedure in the coming months to collect feedback and additional data for the project. The team will present their final report to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) in March.

This is another example of applying Lean concepts and tools to our processes and procedures in order to improve services and leverage cost savings. Thanks to staff for their hard work on this important project. I am excited about seeing the benefits as the improvements are implemented.

Ohio Association of Goodwill Industries (OAGI) Quarterly Meeting

Keeping lines of communication open and building relationships with our partners and providers across the state is very important to me. For this reason, we schedule regular meetings with stakeholders to ensure ample opportunities throughout the year to share information and discuss areas of concern.

Individuals in Job Ready Status by County



A great example of this regular interaction is our quarterly meeting with the Ohio Association of Goodwill Industries (OAGI) which was held this week. Since the Executive Budget recommendations were released on Monday (see story on page 2) it was a good opportunity to share OOD's budget priorities and discuss their potential impact. We also discussed the Employment First partnership with the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), gave an update on the Provider Scorecard, and discussed some operational issues of concern to local Goodwill organizations. It was great to see Margie Pizzuti from the Columbus Goodwill, Joe Byrum from the Ohio Valley Goodwill, the new OAGI President Steve Greenwell from Lorain County Goodwill and meet the new CEO from Goodwill Easter Seals Miami Valley Lance Detrick (Dayton).

Total Statewide:

3,664

* Job Ready Status Individuals have received Vocational Rehabilitation services and are ready and seeking employment.

For more information or questions on stories in this publication, please call the Office of Communications at 614.438.1474.

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