

WEEKLY FOCUS

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

Numbers and the Biennial Budget Process

Ohio's biennial budget is more than just numbers. The work of OOD, as well as other state agencies, has a significant impact on the individuals we serve. We work hard to ensure that this is positive by expanding opportunities for employment and independence for Ohioans with disabilities.

Without state and federal funding we would not be able to provide the services and offer the opportunities we do. The budget process, however, is about allocating scarce resources. Every agency and organization seeking funds from the General Assembly believes they deserve the next dollar; that their programs and services are the best investment.

This is why we have used metrics in a transparent manner.

On Thursday, I testified before the Health and Human Services Subcommittee of the House Finance Committee regarding our budget. I outlined the mission and priorities of the agency and highlighted the programs and initiatives included in the budget bill. We emphasized the improvements we have made over the last four years to serve more Ohioans, more effectively, and in a timelier manner.

I was able to show legislators the improvements we have made using numbers laid out in a scorecard tracking our performance over the last four years. At that time the agency had a waiting list for services.



On Thursday, Director Miller testified before the Health and Human Services Subcommittee of the House Finance Committee about OOD's budget.

- Today we have eliminated all waiting lists that reached 17,000 individuals
- Four years ago the average wait from application to eligibility was over 90 days, today that average is under 40 days
- Over the last four years we have increased the number of individuals working toward their career goals by nearly 30%
- We have increased the number of plans written by nearly 86% and successful outcomes by over 35%
- All of this has been accomplished while we reduced the cost per outcome by 14%

I am proud of what our staff and partners have accomplished. With these improvements OOD is in a stronger position in this budget. The exciting programs and opportunities that were included in the executive budget proposal (detailed in previous issues) offers OOD a real opportunity to positively impact even more Ohioans with disabilities.

The numbers mentioned above communicates in a clear way to legislators that an investment in OOD is a dollar well spent. It allows them to be comfortable supporting our work knowing that we have leveraged every dollar to more effectively serve Ohioans.

During the hearing on Thursday, Representative Mark Romanchuk (R-Ontario) thanked us for providing a scorecard with clear metrics charting our progress and said he wished more state agencies provided this type of data in an easy to read format.



Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council held their annual Developmental Disabilities Awareness and Advocacy Day at the Ohio Statehouse this week.

Subcommittee Chairman Robert Sprague (R-Findlay) similarly noted, that most agencies focus on requesting more funding without outlining what improvements were made using prior funding. He appreciated the fact that we provided the subcommittee with data showing the progress we have made in key areas.

Sometimes a focus on numbers can seem cold and disconnected (whether you are a counselor, a service provider, an individual receiving services, or a family member), but it is only by relentlessly focusing on finding and implementing operational efficiencies and improved procedures that we can truly help more people and do so effectively.

It is those improvements, and the numbers that illustrate them, that result in OOD being entrusted with more resources and more opportunities to increase our impact. This year's biennial budget process is a clear example. We simply would not have been able to make the case for these programs and funds four years ago.

So I want to thank our staff and partners again for all of their hard work these last four years. It has made a real impact on thousands of Ohioans. It has strengthened Ohio's economy and brought independence and a higher quality of life to individuals with disabilities. It has also produced the impressive numbers listed above (and more I didn't list). The numbers made my

testimony on Thursday a lot easier. They positioned the agency to better fulfill its mission and serve even more Ohioans with disabilities.

So keep this in mind the next time you are frustrated with producing a report, reaching a data driven goal, or are challenged to find efficiencies.

DAG Members Attend Budget Hearing

I invited staff from the Director's Advisory Group (DAG) to attend my budget testimony on Thursday. I thought it would be an interesting experience for staff to see how the budget process works and what is involved when an agency testifies. Afterwards, they offered their thoughts on the experience.

Was this the first time you had attended a budget testimony?

Lauren Green, VR Counselor: Yes. This was my first time.

Abbie M. Frase, HR Training Officer: This was my first time attending the budget testimony. It had been several years since visiting the Statehouse. I toured the Statehouse on a class trip and remember seeing the empty hearing room. It was a great experience to see our elected representatives in action.

Did you know March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month?

Was it what you expected? Was there anything that surprised you?

Lauren Green, VR Counselor: It was more than what I expected. I liked being able to see the process. The "why's" and "how's" are what fascinate me.

Abbie M. Frase, HR Training Officer: I was impressed at how cool and calm the Director answered the Representative's questions. It was as if he knew the questions that would be asked ahead of time. The OOD Budget team and Director Miller did an excellent job prepping for the hearing. I was pleased to see how many of the state agencies work together, sharing resources and collaborating on initiatives to improve the quality of life for all Ohioans.

Do you think the Director's testimony, and attending the subcommittee hearing, will change the way you see your work or the work of the agency?

Lauren Green, VR Counselor: I think the Director's testimony gave me perspective regarding what

he's responsible for and what he has to go through to make decisions pertaining to our agency. Everyone has someone to answer to. It was good to be able to see things from his viewpoint. I understand the work of the agency a little better now due to being able to listen to the questioning from the sub-committee. I think it would be helpful to be able to see the other parts of the process as well (if possible) to gain even more knowledge and understanding of why our agency is run the way it is.

Abbie M. Frase, HR Training Officer: The Director's testimony was truly a reflection of the hard work of all employees which contributes to OOD's successes. Director Miller appreciates the work of every employee and that regardless of your position, each one of us is an important part of achieving our agency's ultimate goal. I am extremely proud to be a part of OOD and the work we do to impact the lives of individuals with disabilities.

Any advice for staff who might attend a budget testimony in the future?

Lauren Green, VR Counselor: Bring snacks and a pillow (I'm kidding). Don't be afraid to ask questions. I spoke with everyone there to gain some knowledge regarding the process of the hearings and how decisions, in the end, are made.

Abbie M. Frase, HR Training Officer: Don't be afraid to ask questions about the process. The legislative liaison and other Budget Team members will be happy to explain the Budget Hearing process and how the Director's testimony impacts the future of the agency. Arrive early – if you haven't been to the Statehouse before, the corridors may be a little confusing. Take it all in and enjoy the experience!

March: Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and to kick the month off the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council held their annual Developmental Disabilities Awareness and Advocacy Day at the Ohio Statehouse this week.

A great group of individuals, families, partners, and advocates gathered in the Statehouse Atrium to listen to inspiring speakers explore the day's theme "We Can! Like you!" Individuals with developmental disabilities spoke about their own experiences and used that insight to stress the importance of self-advocacy and leadership, employment, independence, public advocacy, and more. The program was emceed by Shari Cooper, a former Governor's Council on People with



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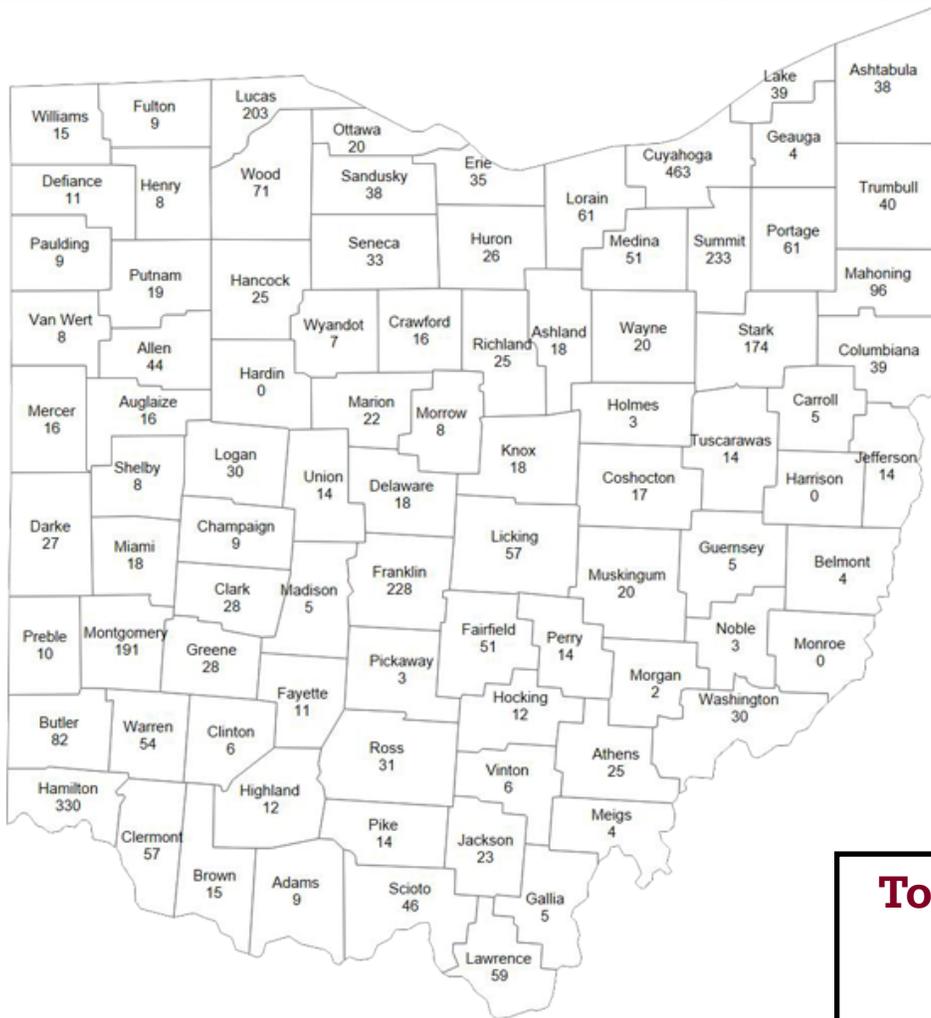
Disabilities member, from Easter Seals of the Miami Valley. Director John Martin from the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) gave an update on the state budget and Jack Wolf, a 15 year old freshman at Brecksville/Broadview Heights High School with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, gave the keynote address.

Jack is an inspiring example of how individuals with disabilities can be active members of their communities and participate in a host of activities from sports and music to travel and recreation. For more on Jack's inspiring story, check out his video on YouTube: <http://youtu.be/jepv5pzRtRQ>.

For additional information on Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day check out the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/OhioDDAwareness>.



Individuals in Job Ready Status by County



Total Statewide:
3,696

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

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