



# WEEKLY FOCUS

January 10, 2014

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Executive Director

*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.*

## Contracting Update

In the December 20 contracting update and *Weekly Focus*, OOD expressed cautious optimism that the December onsite meeting with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) had identified a path forward for our partnerships. Changing from the use of Third Party Cooperative Arrangements to the new contract model will enable OOD to continue to develop cooperative arrangements with our state and local partners.

Just yesterday, OOD received feedback and suggested improvements from RSA on the two new template agreements we plan to utilize for these partnerships. OOD has incorporated RSA's suggested changes and is now ready to proceed with the FFY14 contracting process.

Contractors will receive two separate agreements to execute. The first is a high level Interagency Cash Transfer Agreement related to the match. A second Direct Service Contract will cover the case management activities. Copies of the templates are being emailed to partners to provide an opportunity to review the terms and conditions in advance to help expedite the process.

OOD seeks to begin the new contracting process. Over the next few weeks the contracting unit will be contacting partners to finalize FFY14 budgets, match requirements and deliverables. Match checks to fund the Interagency Cash Transfer Agreements will be due shortly after the agreements are fully executed.

Thank you for your support as we continue our shared mission to support the rehabilitation and employment success of Ohioans with disabilities.

## 2013: Much Was Accomplished

Serving as Executive Director of Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) has provided me a front row seat to many exciting changes. It has been my privilege to work side-by-side with many dedicated individuals who are wholeheartedly committed to

removing barriers to employment for capable and qualified individuals who have a disability.

This year saw the state pass a Biennial Budget Bill that increased funding for the agency while simultaneously changing the agency name from the Rehabilitation Services Commission to Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. We collectively have built upon the momentum of previous years to serve Ohioans with disabilities; and I'm confident we have created an environment for future success in our mission to help individuals with disabilities achieve quality employment, independence and disability determination outcomes.

Since 2009, we made a top priority the elimination of the Order of Selection Waiting List and the number of individuals on the Waiting List continued to drop each month in 2013. Using efficiencies and lean processing to improve performance, OOD is freeing up resources so more people can be served more quickly. OOD allocated these dollars directly to field staff serving individuals with disabilities and was able to release more than 13,100 people from the Waiting List (April 2009 to December 2013). It is important to note that in addition to the number of people with disabilities being released from the Waiting List, the average time that people have spent on the Waiting List has been reduced as well.

OOD was out of compliance with a number of performance indicators set by the Rehabilitation Services Administration since 2003. In 2013, after a long and steady approach of implementing safeguards, the U.S. Department of Education notified us that we have attained full compliance of its 2004 and 2008 findings and have regained achievement of national performance standards. OOD steadfastly focused on compliance with performance indicators and we are pleased that the agency is headed in the right direction.

OOD's Division of Disability Determination decides the medical eligibility for Social Security Disability Insurance benefits and Supplemental Social Security

Income for Ohioans with disabilities that are unable to work. Ohio continues to meet, and in many cases, far exceeded the established federal goals and remains a top performing state in the Chicago Region of the Social Security Administration. This Division determined eligibility of 206,137 claims.

OOD's Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired and Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation had a successful year as well. The work that they have done in the past year is tremendous. While making strides to reduce the Order of Selection Waiting List, VR was able to reduce eligibility decision wait time, while serving more people and writing 50% more plans. Additionally, the implementation of the fee schedule for VR services has had significant impact on controlling costs.

I am proud of the direction that OOD is traveling. We are committed to assisting in improving the lives of individuals with disabilities. Much work is ahead, and with the assistance of providers, community partners, advocates, individuals, and families alike, OOD is forging a new path toward quality employment for individuals with disabilities.

### **Problem of Human Trafficking a Focus**



The Kasich Administration is spotlighting the problem of Human Trafficking. OOD is joining in the effort to bring awareness to this epidemic and recognizes the month of January as Human Trafficking Awareness Month.

A recent OOD training offered staff recommendations to combat human trafficking or the illegal trade of human beings for commercial sexual exploitation and/or forced labor. These recommendations were presented to Governor John Kasich by Ohio's Human Trafficking Task Force in 2012. Task Force recommendations are the beginning of the state's coordination of efforts to identify and rescue victims of human trafficking, establish a coordinated law enforcement system to investigate these crimes, and provide services and treatment to trafficking victims.

According to the training, human trafficking is, "one of the fastest growing criminal enterprises worldwide, and is on pace to surpass the drug trade in less than five years. Ohio is not immune to this plague."

Ohio is not exempt from this horror as human trafficking is taking place all around the state. Each year an estimated 1,078 Ohio children become victims of human trafficking, and 3,016 more are at-risk.

Governor Kasich is committed to aggressively addressing this problem, and acting on the Task Force recommendations. Most recently, the Human Trafficking Commission helped pass House Bill 262, also known as the 'Safe Harbor Law.' It will increase the penalties for traffickers and improve care for victims. Ohioans are urged to report any suspicious activity that may indicate human trafficking.

### **Derek Willer Receives Honor**

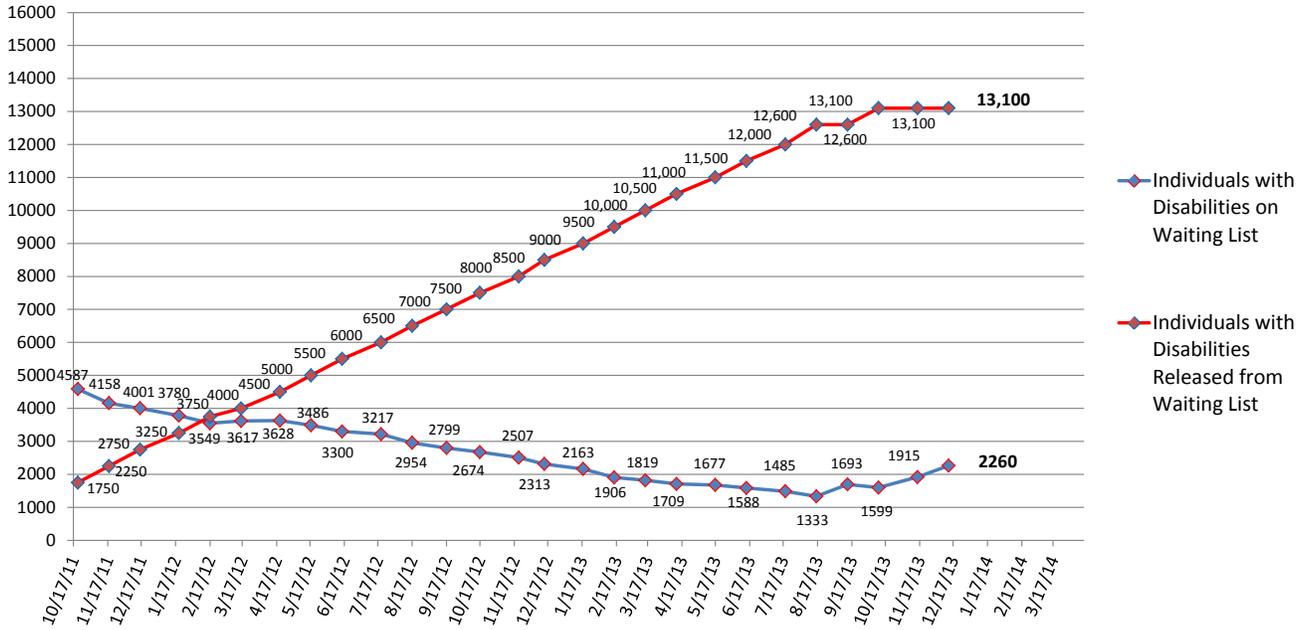
Derek Willer is the supervisor of the Division of Disability Determination's Case Control Department. In late 2013, he received a Regional Commissioner's Citation for "Sustained superior performance of assigned duties over an extended period of time."

Derek accepted the position in December of 2012. He was formerly a unit supervisor in Case Operations where he was recognized as an enthusiastic and innovative leader. Derek is a natural at problem solving and workflow management. He has worked collaboratively with the Case Control Team to continuously improve their ability to manage the work that enters and leaves our Agency.

Despite losing staff since Derek took over, his team never missed a beat. His ability to manage the receipts and assignment of cases has significantly diminished the wait time for individuals filing for a Social Security Disability Determination. If you asked Derek, he would give all the credit to his staff; but he is a great example of a dedicated and committed civil servant.

Derek, I join with your colleagues in offering our congratulations on receiving this honor that reflects exemplary service, hard work, and dedication.

### Number of Individuals with Disabilities on Waiting List



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