

Governor Mike DeWine's proposed budget for fiscal years 2020-2021 supports our mission to provide individuals with disabilities opportunities to achieve quality employment, independence and disability determination outcomes. With a strong commitment of investing in Ohioans with disabilities, to ensure they are not left behind, the proposed budget represents a state investment of \$17.4 million in General Revenue Funds in the first year and \$18.9 million in the second (an 8% increase each year).

For each \$1 of state investment, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) draws down an additional \$3.69 in federal vocational rehabilitation grant funds to support our efforts in Ohio. The budget will strengthen our current programs by developing new patterns of service to ensure we are meeting the employment needs of all Ohioans with disabilities. OOD is prioritizing these key areas:

### **RecoveryOhio**

Work is critical to an individual's recovery. Governor DeWine's budget supports the agency's efforts to address the mental health and substance abuse disorder public health crisis. OOD will *replicate* a successful model established in partnership with the Butler County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Services Board and Common Pleas Judge Keith Spaeth's drug court. In this model, OOD embeds a vocational rehabilitation counselor as an active member of the drug court team to ensure the individual gets a job.

### **High School Students with Disabilities**

This budget expands an existing partnership between OOD and the Ohio Department of Education, called the Ohio Transition Support Partnership, which allows students with disabilities to engage in career exploration and skill development at a younger age. OOD counselors educate parents, teachers and students with disabilities on the importance of work. Together they develop strategies and provide services such as work experiences, job placement and on the job supports to ensure students secure employment upon graduation or transition to post-secondary education. The budget will also increase services to prepare students at the Ohio State School for the Blind and Ohio School for the Deaf transition to college or employment after graduation. New services will be made available through an embedded vocational rehabilitation counselor at each school to provide students vocational counseling, training and job placement assistance.

### **College School Students with Disabilities**

This budget also invests in funding for direct services that will ensure individuals with disabilities working toward a credential or college degree earn higher wages and meet the demands of tomorrow's labor market. This will be accomplished through an innovative partnership between OOD, Ohio's state college and university system and Ohio businesses. These funds will provide access to services such as job placement, technology and internships that will level the playing field for approximately 1,500 students annually.

### **Disability Inclusion**

Governor DeWine's Executive Order (2019-03D) establishes Ohio as a Disability Inclusion State and Model Employer of Individuals with Disabilities, requiring all state agencies to increase recruitment, hiring and advancement of people with disabilities. To support this effort, OOD will develop an internship program for students and adults with disabilities to assist them in gaining access to state government employment. OOD will fund approximately 40 internship opportunities annually for individuals with disabilities served by OOD to create a strong recruitment pipeline for permanent employment.

### **Investment in the Local Business Community**

Collectively these initiatives will allow OOD to serve approximately 4,000 more individuals with disabilities throughout Ohio. OOD counselors will purchase approximately \$10 million more in services from more than 360 service provider partners throughout the state. It also will expand the number of businesses OOD assists in recruiting new employees and strengthening diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

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*The services described are funded, in part, with federal funds awarded by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) under the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Supported Employment Services, and the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind (OIB) programs. For purposes of the VR program, the federal VR grant paid 78.7% of the total costs of the program. In federal fiscal year (FFY) 2018, the VR agency received \$100,336,097 in federal VR funds. Funds appropriated by the state paid 21.3% of the total costs \$27,155,767 under the VR program.*

#### **Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities**

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