

Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) is the state agency that partners with Ohioans with disabilities to achieve quality employment, independence and Social Security disability determination outcomes. It is accomplished through its Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR), Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired (BSVI) and Division of Disability Determination (DDD). A fourth area is the Division of Employer and Innovation Services (EIS), which is responsible for establishing and maintaining partnerships with employers.

Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired

OOD's Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired provides vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to eligible individuals with blindness and low vision to assist them to attain and maintain competitive integrated employment. OOD works with adults seeking to enter the workforce or retain a job, and with youth beginning at age 14 to assist them as they transition from high school, to college and/or the workplace.

Applying for Services - An individual who is interested in applying for VR services can begin the process online by visiting OODWorks.com. This website provides information about OOD's services and includes a self-assessment designed to assist the individual to decide if VR services are the right fit. Individuals with disabilities can also contact any of OOD's field offices to begin the process.

Eligibility - Once an individual has applied, OOD will determine eligibility for services.

In order to be eligible:

- The individual must have a visual impairment,
- The impairment must result in a substantial barrier to employment,
- The individual is presumed to benefit from VR services in terms of an employment outcome, and
- The individual must require VR services to gain or retain employment.

Services and Employment - Once determined eligible, the individual is provided career counseling and guidance to help identify an employment goal. OOD purchases services from providers in the community; closely monitoring to make sure they meet the needs of the individual. OOD, along with its network of providers, works with employers to match individuals who are job ready with available job openings. Once the individual has maintained stable employment for at least 90 days and is satisfied with their job, OOD will close the case. If the individual experiences difficulties on the job later, short-term post-employment services may be available or the individual can reapply for VR services.

Additional BSVI Programs - BSVI administers the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) and supports the independence of individuals with disabilities through the Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) and Personal Care Assistance (PCA) programs. Additionally, BSVI partners with Ohio's Centers for Independent Living (IL) and Community Centers for the Deaf (CCD). BSVI is also charged with the implementation of recommendations identified by the Workforce Integration Task Force (WIT), which supports employment and self-sufficiency of individuals who are deaf, blind or deafblind.

Programs provided by Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) are funded, in whole or in part, with federal grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). For purposes of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program, including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), OOD received 78.7% of its funding through the DOE VR grant. In Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2019, OOD received \$99,548,657 in federal funds. Funds appropriated by the State covered 21.3% of the total costs, or \$26,942,648. Of these federal funds, \$14,932,299 is set aside for Pre-ETS. For purposes of the Supported Employment (SE) Program, the DOE SE grant funded 90% of the costs for the Supported Employment for Youth with a Disability Program up to the grant amount and 100% of the costs of regular Supported Employment program costs up to the grant amount. In FFY 2019, OOD received \$297,857 for SE Youth with a Disability and State appropriated funds paid a small amount more than the remaining 10% or \$33,192 of the total costs. In FFY 2019, OOD received \$297,857 in regular SE grant funds. For purposes of the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind (OIB) Program, the federal grant received from DOE in FFY 2019 paid 90% of the total costs incurred under the program. In FFY 2019, OOD received \$1,153,208 in federal grant funds. Funds appropriated by the State paid over the 10% required match or \$130,000 of the total costs incurred under the OIB program. For purposes of the Independent Living (IL) Program, the federal grant received from HHS paid 90% of the total costs incurred in FFY 2019. In FFY 2019, OOD received funding of \$640,571. Funds appropriated by the State paid 10% or \$71,175 of the total costs incurred under the IL Program.

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities

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