



Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities

John R. Kasich
Governor
Kevin L. Miller
Executive Director

Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired
Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation
Division of Disability Determination

November 27, 2018

The Honorable John R. Kasich
Governor
Riffe Center, 30th Floor
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215-6117

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary of United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Governor Kasich and Madam Secretary DeVos:

On March 1, 2018, Ohio State Senate Bill 144 was signed into law to establish the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) Council. The law became effective on June 1, 2018. This Council replaced the previously existing Rehabilitation Services Commission. The duties of the Council are established by Ohio Revised Code Section 3304.14 and include examining, advising, assisting and evaluating the OOD on its Vocational Rehabilitation Program. This report is required by Ohio Revised Code Section 3304.14(A)(8), and to assist the Secretary in her duties set forth in 20 U.S.C. §1405.

The Council consists of 15 members appointed by the Governor, representing a broad range of rehabilitative service and professional experience from across Ohio. The makeup of the Council follows criteria established by the federal government and directly codified in Ohio law at Ohio Revised Code Section 3304.12, including that a majority of the members have a disability. A list of the Council members is attached.

We are pleased to report the OOD Council held its first meeting on August 15, 2018. I was elected chair of the Council, and Dr. jw Smith was elected vice-chair. In our first meeting, we were provided with an overview of OOD's Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the Division of Employer and Innovation Services, and OOD's progress report.

Going forward, the Council plans to have at least a one-hour training session to educate itself about OOD's Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the Council's various responsibilities at each meeting. For instance, at our year-end meeting in November, we discussed the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment to analyze how we can assist OOD in their efforts to expand services to individuals with disabilities.

In 2019, the Council will be developing mission and vision statements as well as goals. The Council will also review information regarding consumer satisfaction with its Vocational Rehabilitation Program to support OOD in the development of Ohio's Combined State Plan. A key method for that review will be OOD's participant focus groups that are held quarterly in each area of the State and will provide the Council with stakeholder input. This will allow the Council to make recommendations to OOD to expand and enhance services as required by the Council's statutory duty.

OOD is continuing its focus on implementing strategies outlined in the state plan. This includes the Employment First Partnership between OOD and the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities that is designed to increase community employment outcomes for adults with Developmental Disabilities. In addition, the Ohio Transition Support Partnership, an interagency agreement between OOD and the Ohio Department of Education, that expands transition services for students with disabilities, ages 14-21, who are receiving services under an Individualized Education Program (IEP), will remain an area of focus in the coming year.

We will continue to evaluate Ohio's Vocational Rehabilitation Program. As we move forward in fulfilling our duties, we may identify other projects that allow us to further our partnership with OOD.

We look forward to a successful 2019.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Peters, Th.D.
OOD Council Chair

c: OOD Council Members
D. Vitale, Assistant Attorney General
Governor-Elect Mike DeWine Transition Team

Attachments: OOD Annual Report
OOD Council Member Roster