

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Council Meeting

January 20, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Council members in Attendance:

Dr. Carolyn Peters, Chair, Jo Hanna Ward, Dr. Matt Sauer, Vice-chair, Jane Gerhardt, Alison McKay, Pete Moore, Kevin Miller, John Moore, Jeremy Morris, Margie Hegg, Toniya George, jw Smith, Andrea Kramer, Karis Spence

OOD Staff:

Chief Legal Counsel Matt Lampke, BVR Deputy Director Susan Pugh, Chief of Communications Kim Jump, Employer and Innovation Services Deputy Director Kristen Ballinger, Assistant Director Erik Williamson, BSVI Deputy Director Greg Dormer, Marlena Smith, Interpreter, Lucille Twitty, OOD Diversity and Inclusion, Eric Muller, OOD IT, Jennifer Ezell, OOD IT, Shirley Marchi, OOD Communications

Guests:

Emily Turner, Executive Director, Ohio Association of Goodwill Industries, Levi King, Interpreter

Welcome and Introductions

Dr. Carolyn Peters welcomed everyone to the meeting and people introduced themselves.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Council member Dr. Smith moved to approve the November 18, 2020 meeting minutes, seconded by Council member Gerhardt. Motion carried.

Written Public Comments

Emily Turner, Executive Director, Ohio Association of Goodwill Industries (OAGI) and Geoff Collver, Associate Director, The Ohio Council of Behavioral Health Providers provided written comments (attached).

Ms. Pugh stated OOD has a meeting with Ms. Turner, Mr. Lampke, and JCARR to talk through the issues.

Council member McKay stated the Council should have some involvement and responsibility to consult with OOD on their policies and procedures. The OOD Council's VR policy subcommittee can be involved in the rule making and policy making processes. Council member Dr. Smith agreed.

Council Subcommittees:

Dr. Peters asked that each Council member be a participant of one of the OOD Council subcommittees (WIOA, VR Policy, or Annual Report). The following subcommittees and Council members were approved by the Council.

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act - WIOA: Jeremy Morris (Chair), Margie Hegg, Andrea Kramer, and Karis Spence
- VR Policy: Lisa Hickman and Alison McKay (co-chairs), John Moore, jw Smith, and Jo Hanna Ward
- Annual Report: Pete Moore, Jane Gerhardt, Taniya George-Olds, Carlo LoParo

The OOD council chair and vice-chair are ex-officio members and are to attend all subcommittee meetings.

OOD Status Update

Director Kevin Miller stated OOD is approaching preliminary budget discussions within the next two weeks. Governor DeWine's budget will be released and submitted to the House of Representatives and then the General Assembly will begin the process of approval, by July 1st (which is law). We feel confident that we will be in good shape.

Director Miller further stated the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) has to be completed every three years, per federal code. Ms. Ballinger and her team are making adjustments and adding new items from a service delivery perspective with a focused effort on how we serve individuals with different races and religions – inclusion.

Also, Mr. Miller stated there are no dates identified for OOD employees to go back into the office. The State is in collective bargaining with unions. How we move forward with telework and how we work in the office is something we can emphasize with our budget, more towards savings.

In addition, Mr. Miller stated as we move forward in the budget, we are still looking at innovation and new ways of providing service. We work very closely with the CARES Act money approved for the Business Enterprise (BE) Program and providers across the state. We are having ongoing conversations with our providers. For example, the National Federation of the Blind and providers in the VR community. We will be doing new things in this new budget cycle.

Vice-chair Dr. Sauer thanked Director Miller for his leadership. He stated, if the Council can be helpful with the budget process by reaching out to the General Assembly, to let them know. Director Miller stated from an administration standpoint, once the budget is released, we will be willing to share who is on which budget committees and will make

sure we get the information to all Council members. Then Council members can decide how they want to support OOD.

Council member Dr. Smith stated the Council needs to think about creating a Budget subcommittee.

OOD RSA 722 Report- State Comparison

Chief Legal Counsel Matt Lampke provided information about the Annual Report on OOD Appeals and how OOD compares to other states. He stated the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) does not publish this information online. However, he recommended that RSA publish this information online.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Update

BSVI Deputy Director Greg Dormer reported everything looks good except for drastic changes in eligibility decisions, due to the pandemic. He believes applications will increase as BSVI continues to increase its virtual outreach. As the pandemic spreads, eligibility is taking a little bit longer.

Mr. Dormer stated staff are working on virtual outreach. Ms. Berna King presented at the American Council of the Blind's statewide convention. BSVI wants to partner and work with many constituents and consumer groups.

In addition, Mr. Dormer stated BSVI leadership spoke at the National Federation of the Blind statewide conference. BSVI continues outreach efforts. BSVI has a new Toolkit. He thanked Chief of Communications Kim Jump and her team for helping to create the Toolkit. Mr. Dormer stated February is low vision awareness month, and the Toolkit has been given to communications directors, medical practices, and any agencies, organizations that service people with low vision and blindness.

Regarding outreach or updates, Mr. Dormer stated BSVI has been assisting the VR Policy and Training Unit in updating the Informed Choice Policy and Procedure. They have updated its policies and procedures for the Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) program.

Mr. Dormer further stated Katie Scheetz, partnered with the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, parents of transition students who are deaf, and students, to talk about how to prepare for post-secondary activities. The Community Centers for the Deaf (CCDs) are working on projects and awareness to promote diversity. BSVI also received good feedback from the Sight Centers about Informed Choice.

Mr. Dormer thanked EIS Deputy Director Ballinger and her team for the CSNA. This is by far the best one we have done. It is really targeted and is a major leap forward.

BVR Deputy Director Susan Pugh stated due to COVID-19, new applications and plans are down significantly. However, the number served and closed with employment are only down slightly. The average wage and hours worked have increased.

Ms. Pugh stated RSA recently released the Annual Reports of all state VR agencies along with national averages. According to Ohio's report, 57.7% of individuals exiting the program in FY 2019 were working second quarter after exit, which is 6.4% above the national average of 51.3%. Also, 55.9% of individuals exiting the program in FY 2019 were working fourth quarter after exit, which is 12.3% high than the national average of 43.6%.

Vice-chair Dr. Sauer asked if there are any states inquiring about what OOD is doing right? Ms. Pugh responded, yes. She attends regional meetings, and they are interested ask about OOD's Youth Leadership Forums.

OOD Council member McKay requested copies of the annual report submitted to RSA. Ms. Marchi will send the Council the link to the annual report.

Ms. Pugh stated with this year's Summer Youth programs, students will be able to select work experiences in the community and/or remote Pre-Employment Transition Services. OOD has incorporated a variety of flexibilities including reduction in the duration and/or minimum number of hours per week for work experiences where needed and an increase in the maximum number of hours for Pre-Employment Transition Services.

Information has been updated in the Customer Satisfaction Survey from first quarter fiscal year. OOD is expanding opportunities to get people equipment and, planning more in-person meetings. OOD Council member Dr. Smith stated he likes the new format of the survey.

In addition, Ms. Pugh reported on upcoming VR policies for public comment. She stated, several changes they will work into the policy include the federal prohibition to support medical marijuana. Four policies are out for public comment through January 25th - Comprehensive Assessment, Confidentiality, Custody, Guardianship. Then, in early March, Informed Choice and Case Handling Policies will be out for public comment. She encouraged Council members to provide feedback.

Regarding the Informed Choice Policy, Ms. Pugh stated staff conducted interviews and is in the process of evaluating those responses. In addition, there were discussions at local team meetings. OOD is making use of advocacy organizations to get more feedback.

Ms. Pugh stated VR still plans to provide work experiences at employer sites. However, there will be flexibilities due to COVID-19. Students usually work 20 hours per week for five weeks. But if the employer wants the student to be there 10 hours for three weeks, that is fine. For students who prefer remote services, they can continue to receive transition services through our providers. We will increase remote service hours for those students.

Ms. Pugh stated she was very pleased with how well the expansion of the Youth Leadership Forums (YLF) went last year. This year, she is excited to partner with the Statewide Independent Living Center. She thanked SILC Executive Director Jeremy Morris and all the Centers for Independent Living (CILs) for their support. Ms. Pugh stated there will be eight YLFs this year. There were five YLFs last year.

OOD Council member McKay stated, the Council should be consulted on the policies. Ms. Pugh said yes, she will work with Ms. Marchi to set up a VR Policy subcommittee meeting quickly.

Employer and Innovation Services Update

EIS Deputy Director Kristen Ballinger stated OOD saw a lot of success with the virtual hiring events in 2020. The EIS team is planning a series of events for 2021.

First one is taking place in February for work-from-home positions. These virtual interviews will include positions for customer service representatives in the financial, security, and insurance industries. In the spring, a transition-focused event is being planned to facilitate interviews for graduating high school students and students interested in part-time non-permanent employment. Two events are planned in the Spring and the Fall for Ohio College2Careers students for internship and permanent employment. An event focusing on participants served through the Jobs for Recovery program is planned for June. EIS is looking at hosting one major employer who has a statewide presence to schedule interviews for their positions. In October planning virtual regional hiring events again with National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Ms. Ballinger stated in 2020, OOD facilitated 460 interviews for 330 participants with 50 unique employers through multiple virtual hiring events.

In addition, Ms. Ballinger stated, EIS hosted the first webinar in a five-part series on January 13, 2021, titled, The Employers' ADA Handbook for 229 attendees. The first session, Title 1 Overview, educated employers about their responsibilities under Title 1 of the ADA and the protections afforded to all applicants and employees with disabilities to prevent discrimination in employment. Additional webinars are scheduled February 24, March 24, April 28, and May 26, 2021.

The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) survey of Individuals with Disabilities was distributed on January 19, 2021. The CSNA was distributed to more than 20,000 participants who cases were closed through September 30, 2020. This will help us ensure that people with disabilities have a voice, they receive services to get a job, or did not help them get a job. Ms. Ballinger thanked the OOD Council members and the Office of Communications for helping to promote the CSNA.

Ms. Ballinger stated, one of the special focus areas of the CSNA will be looking at race, ethnicity, service outcomes, disability categories, goal of analysis. The CSNA has historically looked at serving people proportionately to population. This will look more at outcomes that are achieved by the VR program to see if there are any disparities in race, ethnicity, etc., about services received.

OOD Council Vice-chair Dr. Sauer asked, what is the matrix of getting survey out to the rural counties in Ohio? EIS Deputy Director Ballinger responded, we asked our provider organizations to send the information, we sent the information in an email distribution to several thousand subscribers of the OOD Works newsletter, we asked the CILS and CCDs to share the information, and the information was put out on OOD's social media platforms.

Chair's Comments

Reapply to Council: Council members whose terms expire June 1, should reapply with the Governor's Office Boards and Commissions as soon as possible.

Chief Legal Counsel Matt Lampke stated Council members are able to serve two terms on the Council. When the OOD Council was initially formed, terms were staggered by having some members appointed for one, two, or three-year terms. Council members who want to return as a Council member must take a three-year period off before reapplying.

Question and Answer format for next OOD Council meeting. The public can submit questions in the chat during the April 21, 2021 Council meeting in Microsoft Teams. This in addition to the written comments the public can submit. A reminder that written comments will continue to be addressed at the beginning of the meeting and the "chat" public comments will be addressed at the end of the meeting, during public comment.

Council Members Discussion/Comments

Council member Pete Moore stated it is remarkable the work OOD has done during the pandemic. He appreciates OOD's hard work.

Dr. Peters stated the Council is proud to be a part of Director Miller's leadership and all the great work OOD staff is doing. The reports enhance our knowledge and are greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Public Comment

None.

Adjourn

Council member Gerhardt moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Council member John Moore. Motion carried.