

Weekly Focus

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Executive Director

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The mission of the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission is to ensure individuals with disabilities achieve quality employment, independence and disability determination outcomes through integrated services, partnerships and innovation.

Mohr Leadership Training at RSC

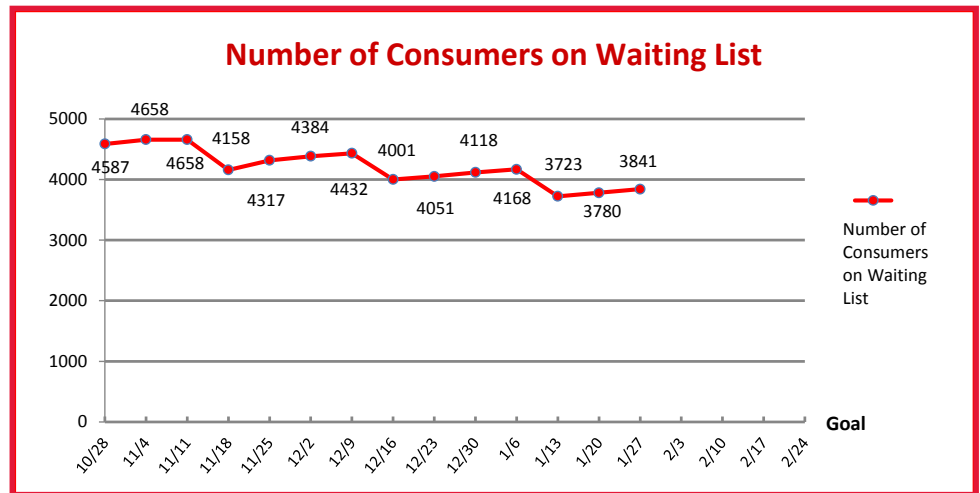
The employee advisory groups from the Vocational Rehabilitation and Disability Determination divisions and RSC executive staff got more than we could have hoped for from an hour with Ohio Rehabilitation and Correction Director Gary Mohr. Director Mohr is in the midst of systemic change of Ohio's entire prison system, cutting spending by \$200 million and reducing staff by 1,305 positions. His time is valuable but his insight on what is possible during the process of great change is an inspiration to RSC.

Director Mohr detailed how 13,000 Ohio prison employees contributed process improvement suggestions to drive his reform effort, producing \$35 million dollars of annual savings. Director Mohr told us that Maslow's hierarchy of human needs gave him



Ohio Rehabilitation and Correction Director Mohr meets with the Director's Advisory Group.

the confidence to trust employee directed change, even when it would cause a loss of jobs. This psychological pyramid that applies to all of humanity says people



want to make a contribution, and want to do something that matters in the short time of their life. It is the task of managers to be leaders and create opportunities for employees to make a contribution that improves the organization on a daily basis. Director Mohr says any agency is only as good as the people who work there; people will work better if they feel good about coming to work, so it's up to leaders to help others feel good about their work.

Director Mohr says this is why he treats people differently. He says a Harvard Business Review study of high performance organizations across many different missions confirms that the best of them share the practice of treating people differently. The point is each person is unique and can be the most important person in the entire organization at any given moment if empowered by leadership that recognizes and builds upon their strengths, trusting that every employee would like to feel connected to the improvement of the organization.

Director Mohr's leadership experience has required him to change cultural conditions that impede improvement in organizations. Mohr says he has learned that leaders must listen for 'WE' to take an organization's cultural pulse. When 'WE' means the total organization, there is cultural alignment and the team is working together.

Director Mohr says it is crucial to have a conceptual anchor driving your daily decisions, something that is powerful enough to make your work a heartfelt mission. Director Mohr told us people who are working from a conceptual anchor and contributing to an important mission can't wait to get to work in the morning. This is my goal for RSC.

Statewide Needs Assessment Begins

RSC has partnered with The Ohio State University for a comprehensive statewide needs assessment of our vocational rehabilitation services. Under the direction of Dr. David Julian of the Center for Learning Excellence and Dr. Margo Izzo of the Nisonger Center, we have started a process that will result in a roadmap telling us where we are and where we need to go.

We will be able to identify underserved populations and determine program specific needs for individuals based on their disability type and geographic location when this research project is complete. The needs assessment will tell us where we have gaps in service to people with disabilities, how those gaps should be prioritized and what the policy implications are as a result of the priorities identified.



Kristall Day PhD., Janet Cool, RSC Manager, David Julian, PhD. and Melinda Hutcherson of OSU discuss the comprehensive statewide needs assessment with RSC staff.

This research will combine data from other state, local and federal agencies with survey research that gives us deep insight into the perceptions of RSC held by individuals we serve, private sector and other state agency partners we work with to provide services, and employers who have worked with us along with others who have not.

The quality of our survey research is being greatly assisted by 6 members (former consumers) of the Consumer Advisory Committee who volunteered to conduct the 15 minute survey interview with a random sample of individuals who experienced unsuccessful case closures.

In addition, we are working with the Ohio Business Leadership Network (OBLN), as well as employers who have previously hired RSC consumers, to get

the impressions of employers who have a working relationship with RSC. A broader range of business contacts supplied by the Ohio Department of Development will also be surveyed for their impressions on employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

With an anticipated completion date of April 1, we will have data based projections of unmet needs in each of Ohio's 88 counties and prevalence estimates of future disability types by county through 2016. We will have a thorough understanding of how consumers, partners and employers view what we are currently doing, and their opinions on what we should be doing differently to be more effective, in preparing consumers for successful employment outcomes.

Our efforts have included coordination of various state agencies' data resources which have never before been coordinated at this level in order to produce a document that will help RSC make key decisions for the next four years. I am confident we will make much better decisions and better serve consumers, partners and employers with the foundation of a truly excellent assessment of the problems and opportunities that await us.

School to Work Transition Partnership Brewing

We had a great meeting at RSC this week with a team from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) led by state Superintendent Stan Heffner. RSC and ODE are teammates in the mission of assisting young people with an individualized education plan to a successful transition from school to work with an individualized plan of employment. This joint mission is underlined by the fact that our federal funding source, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), is an agency of the U.S. Department of Education.

RSC BVR Deputy Director Susan Pugh and CFO Marc Protsman recently spent time in Iowa, where the state Vocational Rehabilitation Services Department receives credit for spending on vocational rehabilitation for students with Individual Education Plans (IEP's) through the state special education budget, enabling a federal match from the RSA. Since Ohio RSC is millions of dollars under our federal allocation of funds for lack of matching dollars to draw down the funds, this is a high priority opportunity for us.

If Ohio followed the same model, one dollar from ODE funded local school special education budgets, connected to creation of Individual Plans for Employment (IPE's) would allow RSC to draw \$3.69 in matching federal funds from the RSA. Because a successful school to work transition is the key launching students with disabilities into a life of independence through the self-sufficiency a job provides, this is a top priority for RSA.

We have written to the RSA, notifying them of our intention to partner like Iowa as a means of drawing their matching dollars and have outlined some of the collaboration on school to work we believe qualifies for this draw down of our federal allocation of funds. Moreover, we are exploring other projects we could take directly to local schools, with the assistance of the ODE, which would also qualify for the RSA matching funds. I will detail the specifics of our joint program when we have settled on the ideas that we want to develop. But, the plan to partner with ODE and with local schools to make the \$610 million Ohio Special Education budget a source of dollars that can draw the RSA match is even more exciting than the specifics of the program we start.

Executive Staff Tours Akron

We spent a long day on the road Thursday taking a firsthand look at a new Post Traumatic Care Center in Stow and then meeting with RSC teammates in our Akron office. I have met with leadership of the Mentis Neuro Rehabilitation Center at RSC headquarters so it was great to take a tour of the new facility and have the entire RSC leadership team see this new resource for Ohioans suffering from traumatic brain injury.

Mentis was started in Texas, where they've had great success, by former Kent State University football player Jerome Mee. With so many soldiers suffering traumatic brain injury, the incidence of strokes growing rapidly and high speed auto accidents being an ever present danger, the need for a specialized rehabilitation center is well-known to RSC.

This issue was driven into our consciousness by a riveting Internet video of Dr. Chuck Sandstrom, an RSC Akron consumer who suffered a traumatic brain injury as the result of a high profile crime. Now, Dr. Sandstrom has launched a business as an inspirational speaker with the assistance of our Akron office.



Director Miller meets with Akron office staff.

We had a spirited hour and a half discussion with the Akron staff who put together some great questions. Some of this information has been shared in past editions of the Weekly Focus, but it is a much better experience for me and for our team to go deeper into these issues through open discussion. I thank our colleagues in Akron for a highly productive and enjoyable meeting.

For more information or questions on stories in this publication please call Shirley Marchi, Community Relations Liaison, at 614.438.1477.

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