

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.

It's Not Our Money!

It's a tough week for anyone who works in government, thanks to the outrage over wasteful spending on a Las Vegas conference by the General Services Administration (GSA). The media coverage is intense and Congress is holding four hearings on the \$823,000 event held for 300 employees of the federal agency entrusted by taxpayers to manage government real estate and non-military procurement.



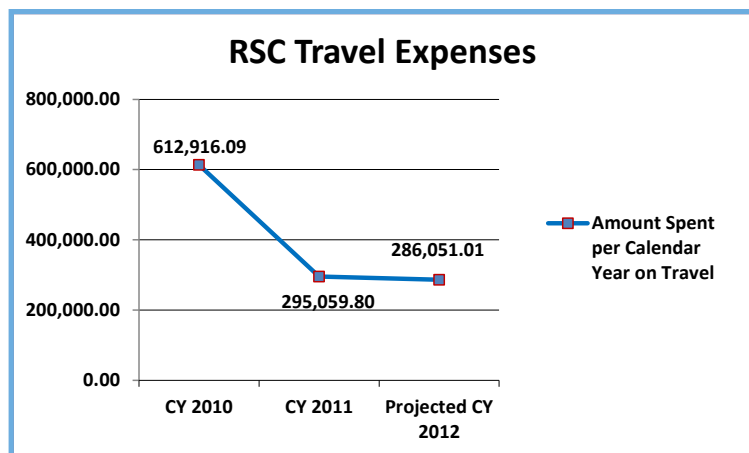
The bipartisan anger over this issue is fueled by far more than the \$2,743 per person wasted on a conference as an excuse for a party. The even bigger issue is the obvious sense of entitlement felt by the Federal government agency with a mission of managing purchasing in a manner that protects taxpayer interests. Now, GSA's entire reason for being is in question, as is the management process that lacked safeguards against obvious excess. Within days of the Inspector General's report, the Director of the GSA at the time of this conference resigned to take responsibility for the management failure that allowed this insult to taxpayers. The initial investigation has not surprisingly found many more instances of indefensible spending, including a five day trip to Maui with spouses, for a one hour event.

RSC Spending Constraints

The spending constraints we have implemented at RSC are intended to shield us from having our commitment to our mission questioned in this way by building managerial checkpoints into our spending process. Lawmakers from both political parties savaged the GSA in hearings this week because average taxpayers were treated with contempt by government employees who are funded by those citizens.

While it is impossible to imagine anyone at RSC doing anything even close to the GSA abuse, it is not hard to imagine every dollar we spend examined with skepticism by both taxpayers and lawmakers. This is why we have continuously stressed the need to manage our budget in the most cost effective way possible. It is why we have cut real estate costs by embedding counselors in other government agencies, why travel costs have been cut by more than 51% and why our collaborations now include an accountability process.

The angst caused by some of our spending accountability safeguards are far better than the open hostility directed at government bodies who forget **it's not our money**. In the aftermath of the Las Vegas debacle, the GSA has canceled 35 planned events to avoid further scrutiny. This would have been avoided by an oversight process monitoring all spending. There are already TV commercials for the competing local TV newscasts urging viewers to call with tips on government waste. The newspapers all have specialists devoted to this mission. RSC has a good story to tell with a travel spending reduction from \$612,916 to \$295,059 in a year, and our frugality will continue. Assuming we meet next year's modest 3% improvement on travel savings, our



total two year savings will be \$654,348. Money we can devote to serving the needs of Ohioans with disabilities. When you put this savings in the context of service to our consumers, we now have the funds to assist an additional 75 Ohioans with disabilities this year and the same number next year. I'm proud that our savings does more than safeguard our reputation; it aids our ability to assist the people we exist to serve.

Employment First is TOPS

The Employment First Initiative, signed into policy as an Executive Order by Governor Kasich, dedicates Ohio to the concept of integrated community employment as the first option for all Ohioans. RSC is part of the Employment First team, led by the Department of Developmental Disabilities, with the responsibility of establishing relationships with employers to make community based employment a viable alternative to sheltered workshops.

That's why I was so happy to spend time at the Transition Options in Post-Secondary Settings for students with Intellectual Disabilities (TOPS) retreat at Ohio State



Director Miller addresses the TOPS retreat at OSU.

University. OSU and Kent State have secured a \$9 million federal grant for a five year pilot of the program which typically implements a Project SEARCH program within a university setting, as first done by Xavier University and currently done by Miami and the University of Toledo, in addition to Kent State and Ohio State.

The TOPS program is an innovative model of the Project SEARCH program that provides access to academic classes, internships and social supports to maximize employment opportunities for youth with disabilities. The TOPS program involves university students who are employed to provide academic and social supports to the TOPS students. This enhances the climate for more inclusive communities in the future, breaks down stereotypes and myths about people with disabilities and creates more employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the future.

The most exciting aspect of the TOPS program is the ability to scale quickly in Ohio and touch many lives during the critical school to work transition following high school. Ohio is filled with college communities who

are watching this program grow successfully across the state. We expect TOPS to both grow and improve, thanks to the collaboration of the partner programs across the state that came together this week for a retreat devoted to that purpose.

RSC & ODJFS Combine for Project Management Program

Project management is one of the top specialties in both business and government, so RSC is thrilled to have a team from our Division of Information Technology paired with counterparts from the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services (ODJFS) in a training program.

This project is intended to leave behind lasting improvements at RSC as we construct a data warehouse capable of data mining to help drive our management decisions. Every bureau and division at RSC met with the project management team to identify the data we create at RSC, where it is housed, how it is used and what data we want that we don't have.

Program Planning Committee Meets

RSC Commissioners on the Program Planning Committee had an information packed meeting at headquarters. Program Planning Committee Chair Jack Licate and Commissioners Michelle Dillingham and Jacqui Romer-Sensky got updates on the Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council, the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, the VR state plan, the RSC strategic plan performance check and the compliance findings on our RSA Corrective Action Plan. The Commissioners all had excellent questions on these issues and their input will make each of these important programs better.



(From left) Commissioner Licate and Commissioner Dillingham at the Program Planning Committee meeting.

Ohio University Visit

We probably met some future RSC Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors this week at Ohio University (OU). Deputy Director Dan Connors and I spoke with about 20 OU Master's Degree program students as part of their course, Job Theory and Development for People with Disabilities. These students will soon be licensed as Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC) and



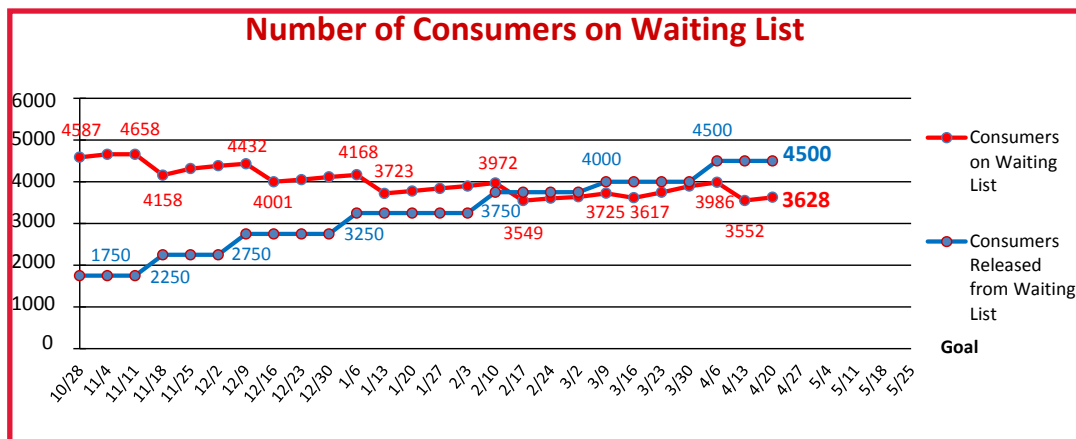
Director Miller is a guest speaker at an Ohio University class.

dealing with issues like the order of selection and how to prepare a first rate plan for employment for each individual they counsel. But their first mission is finding a job; so much of our discussion was about the opportunities at RSC and Vocational Rehabilitation Public & Private Partnerships that are available for a newly minted CRC. It's always great to meet with students, as the passion and energy

they bring to our discussions help reinvigorate all of us working in the Vocational Rehabilitation field.

OAGI & RSC Hold Quarterly Meeting

Partnerships are crucial to our ability to provide service at RSC so we keep in close contact with the Ohio Association of Goodwill Industries (OAGI). Our quarterly meeting with OAGI covered all of the important initiatives at RSC, updating our partners on the progress we are making on a fee schedule, contract language, the needs assessment and statewide VR plan.



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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