



*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.*

## Commissioners Presented CSNA and VR State Plan

RSC Commissioners met Thursday with the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) and the Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan (State Plan) for FFY 2013 dominating the agenda.

The CSNA is a massive data collection project, driven by a research team from The Ohio State University, projecting the number of Ohioans with disabilities in need of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services by type of disability, age, race and ethnicity and by county of residence.

The CSNA calculates that more than 1.5 million Ohioans, or 13.3% of the total state population, has some form of disability. The penetration rate for service falls below 15% of the population for all disability categories in the overwhelming majority of counties. This means that the state VR program is just scratching the surface of Ohioans with disabilities that would likely benefit from VR services.

### Recommendations

- Continue efficiency improvements and partnership programs.

RSC funding decreased between 2007 and 2011 resulting in a loss of federal match dollars and a reduction in services. These issues have been painstakingly documented in prior Weekly Focus articles. The combination of ultra-efficient programs and partnerships with outside funding sources are important strategies to spend funds we have with the most impact and to draw all possible dollars for the RSC VR mission.

- Study county-level best practices.

Pockets of excellence can be identified in various counties throughout the state in terms of our service rates to specific populations. Spreading their best practices widely would likely improve service rates within the VR program to more consistent levels statewide.

- Establish better alignment of resources with needs.

CSNA results will guide future workforce planning activities to help RSC make sure we locate counselors where people with disabilities live in Ohio. Results also will guide local outreach efforts to make sure we are connecting with people with disabilities statewide.

- Expand service to transition age youth through partnership with the Ohio Department of Education.

Of the 1.7 million transition age youth in Ohio, the CSNA indicates more than 111,000 experience disabilities. The Ohio Department of Education data tells us nearly 15,000 students have an identified need for VR services on their Individual Education Plan (IEP), but less than 3,500 transition age youth received RSC services last year. The partnership program we are currently working on with the Ohio Department of Education can help close that gap.



*Commissioner David V. Daugherty, Commissioner Cynthia Rees, BVR Deputy Director Susan Pugh and Vice-Chair Jack Licate at the Commissioners Meeting*

- Tie outcome achievement data to resource investment decisions.

RSC is currently collecting more information than ever before precisely so we can make data driven decisions.

- Partner with the Ohio Department of Aging for VR Services.

More than 50% of Ohioans with disabilities are over the age of 60, so we would like to expand on our current partnership between RSC and the Ohio Department of Aging.

- Study use of supported employment services.

Strategic use of supported employment on an ongoing basis is crucial to keeping consumers with the most significant disabilities (MSD) on their jobs and progressing in their careers after VR services are complete. Without adequate long-term supports, many consumers have a difficult time maintaining that success.

- Use labor market information to develop employment goals.

When Individual Plans for Employment (IPE) reflect needs of the Ohio labor market, RSC consumers have a much better success rate in the job market. The linkage between employer need and employee skill is well established and needs to be acknowledged from the very start in RSC IPEs.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan Reflects CSNA**

The VR State Plan, approved by the commissioners, links tightly to the recommendations from the CSNA listed above.

The VR State Plan details many of the existing programs and partnerships devoted to the needs of Ohioans with disabilities and spells out how the programs will be altered to reflect the latest findings from the CSNA. The State Plan will be submitted to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) for approval and will go into effect on October 1, 2012.

### **Key Components of the State Plan**

The key measure of both our CSNA and State Plan is whether it helps RSC select the right goals and improve performance on these key priorities.

- Waiver of Statewideness.

RSC will be requesting a Waiver of Statewideness for our Vocational Rehabilitation Public & Private Partnerships (VRP3) programs and other piloted agreements with other state agencies.

- Collaboration with other Agencies.

The FFY 2013 State Plan will include collaboration with: the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Aging, Recovery to Work, the Department of Veterans Services, and the Office of Workforce Transformation.

- Department of Education.

The FFY 2013 VR State Plan will include an interagency agreement with the Ohio Department of Education, Office of Exceptional Children and utilize Project SEARCH and other models for increased engagement with the business community.

- Annual Service Estimates.

RSC will continue to leverage available state and local funds to draw down the maximum federal funds for the VR program. The goal is to increase slightly the number served in FFY 2013.

- Order of Selection.

RSC will continue to operate under an Order of Selection in FFY 2013.

- Supported Employment Services.

RSC will develop a plan for a more strategic deployment of resources from the Supported Employment grant.

## RSC Executive Team Visits Elyria and Mansfield

Our first stop was the Linking Employment, Abilities and Potential (LEAP) office in Lorain County. LEAP staffers at the Elyria office gave us inspiring details on how they are meeting their mission to advance a society of equal opportunity for all persons, regardless of disability, with help from RSC.

LEAP, as it exists today, was created by Doris Brennan, the first Ohioan inducted into the National Hall of Fame for Persons with Disabilities and a leader in the effort to create Centers for Independent Living in Ohio. These achievements are noted by RSC where one of our staff training rooms is named for Doris Brennan and her lifetime achievements are detailed on a photo display.

LEAP is based in Cleveland on Lorain Avenue with a satellite office in Lorain County at the Elyria location we visited. They have also provided service to Erie, Geauga, Huron, Lake, Mahoning, Sandusky, Stark, Summit, Trumbull, Wayne and Ashtabula county residents. Obviously, LEAP is an important partner to RSC, so it was reassuring to hear Executive Director Melanie Hogan welcome the coming implementation of a Fee Schedule by RSC as a necessary management tool.



*LEAP Executive Director Melanie Hogan (left) and LEAP Independent Living Services Director Therese Connor (right)*

A LEAP Client who incurred a disability from an auto accident detailed for us how the LEAP independent living services have enhanced his life. The LEAP client is now at retirement age but says he has no doubt the LEAP counselors, who have provided assistive technologies to overcome his vision impairment caused by the car crash, could have taught him how to use the technology for a new career if the same event happened today.



*RSC Rehabilitation Program Specialist Katie Scheetz (center) at the Center for Individual and Family Services in Mansfield*

We saw another strong community-based program when we visited the Center for Individual and Family Services (Center) in Mansfield. The Community Center for the Deaf (CCD) is part of the multi-faceted program at the Center and was the topic of a roundtable discussion on the partnership between RSC and the CCD.

While at the Center we saw two highly efficient job programs. Progress Industries is a supported employment program with contracts to produce products for household name companies like WalMart, Honda and Ford. We also saw a yard care and janitorial service with a growing list of clients in the Richland county area and toured a busy facility that includes residential service for mental health and drug or alcohol treatment.

In both of our visits, the RSC leadership team saw many issues our partners must address to make progress on our shared goal of providing independence and employment to Ohioans with disabilities.

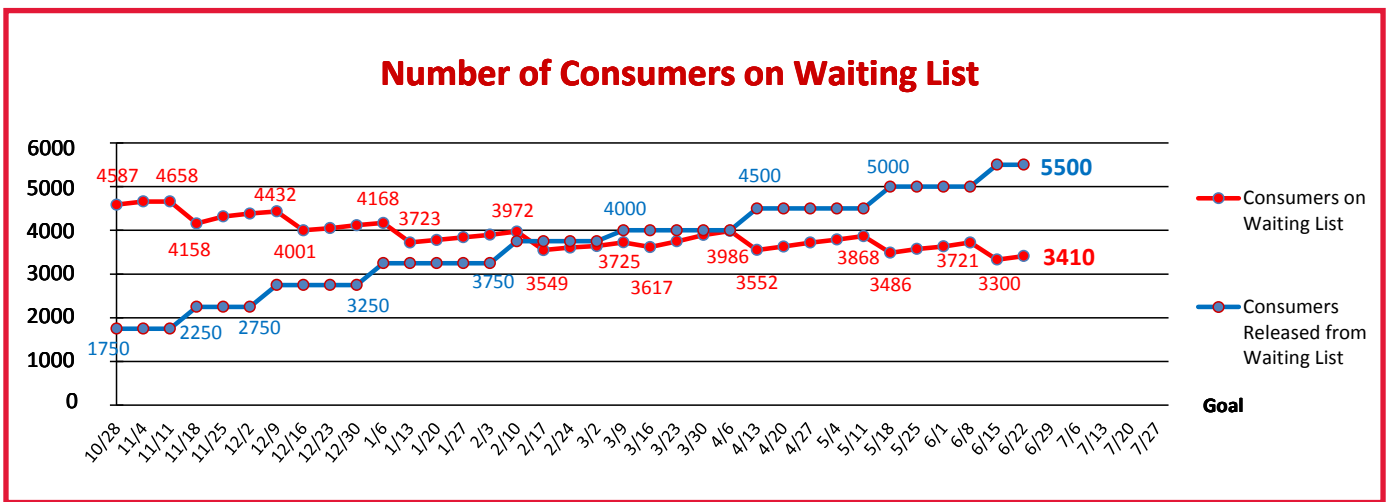
## Fee Schedule Meeting Signups on the RSC Website

RSC has been working with Public Consulting Group (PCG) to establish a statewide Fee Schedule covering 29 VR services in Ohio, as we have reported in the Weekly Focus at every step in the process. Now we are nearing completion of the project and will be hosting several informational meetings to go over the new fees and recommendations regarding credentialing, training and definitions of service.

These meetings will be held at RSC headquarters and are tentatively set for July 10, 11 and 12. PCG consultants and RSC leadership will be on-hand to preview the Fee Schedule recommendations and to answer questions. There will be two sessions each day from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm and from 1:30 pm - 4:30 pm. Each RSC partner participating is limited to two representatives at the meeting and they must attend the same session.

We have emailed all partners a sign-up sheet for the sessions; the sign-up document is also on the RSC website at the top of the News page. For organizations that cannot manage to attend a session in Columbus, we have established a WebEx link that will allow virtual participation through the Internet.

**The Deadline for sign up is June 25; please make your selection ASAP! Space is limited so we are requiring RSVPs to attend these meetings.**



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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