

WEEKLY FOCUS

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Ohio | Rehabilitation Services Commission

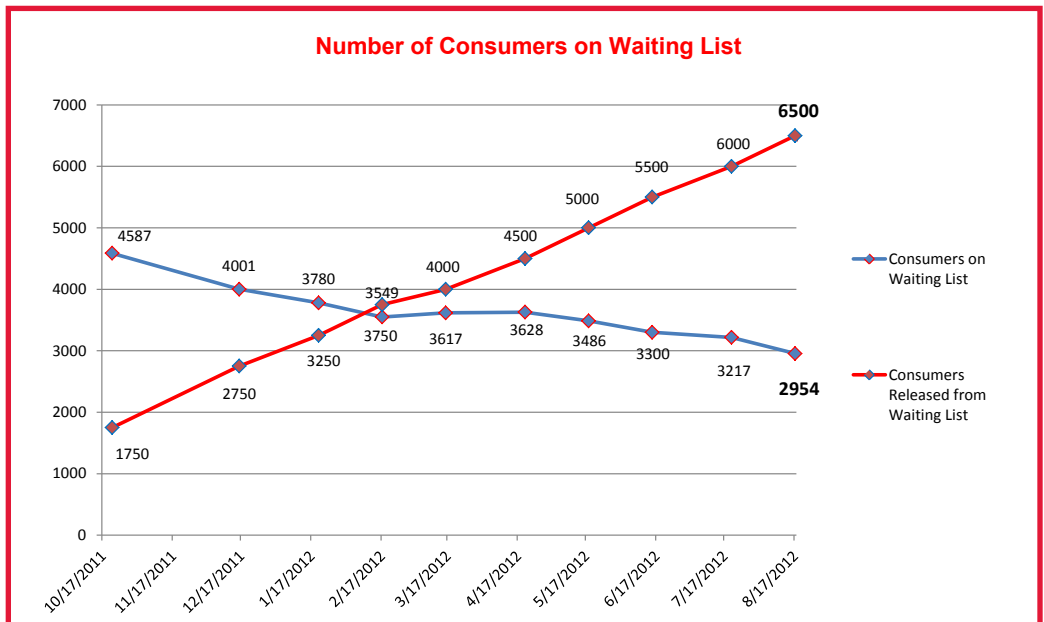
Kevin L. Miller
Executive Director

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.

Waiting List Milestone Reached

Progress is measured in milestones, so I am happy to report our waiting list for service is now fewer than 3,000 people, with the release of another 500 RSC consumers this week. Since we have made elimination of the waiting list a top RSC priority and started working to add consumers to our caseloads, 6,500 consumers have been moved off the waiting list.

Success brings energy, so I'm not surprised that our momentum is building as we make more and more progress on the waiting list. All of RSC is focused on maintaining this achievement and eliminating the waiting list in the foreseeable future.



Connors Interview



Out-going BSVI Deputy Director Dan Connors is congratulated by Director Miller on his new position.

Today is Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired (BSVI) Deputy Director Dan Connors' last day at RSC. Dan has come a long way since joining RSC as an intern, moreover he has been a key player in agency initiatives well beyond the BSVI program. We will miss Dan at RSC but are thrilled for his opportunity

and thankful that Dan will continue to serve Ohioans with disabilities.

How will your new position at St. Joseph Home build upon your experience at RSC?

I have had the privilege of serving in a variety of roles in my time at RSC and all of these experiences have shaped me in ways that will directly apply to my new role at St. Joseph. To me, any service to individuals with disabilities should be about maximizing their personal independence and integration into their community. My time at RSC has been focused on this goal in the context of community employment. While St. Joseph home does not have a primary focus of community employment, they still have a very similar mission of maximizing the independence and integration of their residents and respite customers, and there is much work to do in this area. In many ways, I am changing the setting but continuing the focus that I have had at RSC.

My position at St. Joseph home will additionally involve partnership with the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) and the Hamilton County Board of Developmental Disabilities. I have had the privilege in my role at RSC of developing strong partnerships with DODD at the state level and with local boards of DD and that experience will be invaluable to my learning in my new role.

How has your career at RSC changed you as an individual?

My career at RSC has changed me in many ways. When I first came to RSC as an intern in August of 2000, I could not have possibly envisioned the way my career path would have unfolded, but every step of the way has been a learning experience and a growth opportunity. Although there are a number of ways that RSC has helped me develop and grow as an individual, I would say that the single biggest way RSC has changed me is that I have grown to understand the importance of focusing on the mission of what we do and not getting off course by the day to day challenges that can pull your focus from what is important. I believe the core mission of RSC is one that is something every person who works at RSC can be proud of; and if we collectively remain committed to it, we will resist the temptation to be caught up in many of the challenges that pull our focus away. As an agency, RSC has had many challenges over the last several years; but I have worked with staff and leadership at every level, and they are committed to the core of what RSC does and in fulfilling its mission and this has been a great reminder to me personally to not lose this focus.

What are the opportunities on the horizon at RSC you will miss working on?

This is probably the easiest question for me to answer because I believe RSC's possibilities moving forward are endless. RSC has been working through a very difficult time as an agency for a number of years now. In an agency whose mission centers around employment, Ohio's economic and labor climate has been an extreme challenge over the last several years. While this has placed a number of challenges on RSC accomplishing its mission, it also has opened up a number of opportunities to forge new partnerships and work differently. Whether we like to admit it or not, times of challenge are often the only times that we truly change what we're doing so that we can survive. RSC has had to change its practice on almost every level, from where we house counselors to the kinds of partnerships that we forge. During these transitions, it feels chaotic and it is a time of great stress. As it settles in, however, there are new opportunities to be better. Although many of the challenges we still face are real and there is more work to do, I truly believe that RSC is set to move forward and can be stronger than it has ever been. If there is one thing that I will miss, it will be the opportunity to be a part of that and see some of these changes come to fruition.

What are the problems that you are glad to put behind you?

I wouldn't say that I am glad to put anything behind me. As I stated in the earlier question, there are still many challenges ahead as RSC moves forward and moving through those can be stressful, so in one sense I won't miss those challenges. On the other hand, I am a big believer that challenges are unavoidable and how you react to them is what life is really all about. So while I am leaving challenges behind I will be embracing new challenges and that is exciting to me.

New Ohio Project SEARCH Staff Trains at RSC

Over fifty new Project SEARCH partners gathered Monday and Tuesday for training on the Project SEARCH model of high school transition for young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The training



Over 50 new Project SEARCH partners attended training at RSC.

sessions, held in Columbus at the RSC offices, were led by Susie Rutkowski and Linda Emery from the Project SEARCH Central Administration at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. Participants included Project SEARCH teachers, job coaches, VR Counselors and Business Liaisons from across the state—most from the five new programs that will be starting this year at the following businesses:

- Grandview Medical Center in Dayton, Ohio
- Lake County Board of Developmental Disabilities in Mentor, Ohio
- Mercy Regional Medical Center in Lorain, Ohio
- Springfield Regional Medical Center in Springfield, Ohio
- The University of Findlay in Findlay, Ohio

The training session also included new staff at existing Project SEARCH programs such as Parma Community General Hospital in Parma, Ohio, and Fairfield Medical Center in Lancaster, Ohio. Many schools and community rehabilitation organizations were represented among

this group of Project SEARCH program partners. The training was sponsored by the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council and the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission.



Chris Moranda of the Ohio Business Leadership Network

Project SEARCH is designed for young adults with developmental disabilities who are in their last year of high school. The students are immersed as interns in a host business for one academic year where they participate in three internships, practice employability skills and learn competitive job skills to prepare them for employment in their communities.



Linda Emery of Project SEARCH

Each Project SEARCH program includes as its partners a local school district, which provides the teacher and students; the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission for vocational guidance and job training resources; a community rehabilitation provider for job coaching and job development; the local county

board of DD for follow-along services once the intern is employed; and the host business, which provides the internships and space for a training room. There are 30 Project SEARCH programs in Ohio and over 200 programs across the country and beyond.

I was glad to be able to address this group along with BVR Deputy Director Susan Pugh, and make the point that in addition to creating a social network and sense of purpose that comes with a job, when Project SEARCH assists a successful school to work transition, the lifetime savings on government benefits exceed \$1 million. Project SEARCH gives us great hope that our mission of IEP to IPE can work wonders if the bridge between Individual Education Plan (IEP) and Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) models this successful program.

GCPD Elects Matt Sauer as Chairman

The Governor's Council on People with Disabilities (GCPD) held a two day meeting this week at the RSC Division of Disability Determination office. The leadership baton was passed from Chairman Linda Oda

to University of Cincinnati Accommodation Coordinator Matt Sauer who was elected 2012-13 GCPD Chairman.

Dr. Sue Zake of the Ohio Department of Education was a guest speaker for GCPD members who were also briefed on the recent Youth Leadership Forum (YLF), so assisting in our efforts to make a successful school-to-work transition is a high priority for GCPD. But this group is well aware of the changing demographics in our nation and state, so they spent time with Jane Byrnes of the Ohio Department of Aging (ODA). This is crucial information as most Ohioans with a disability have acquired their condition through the process of aging. That's why RSC is working closely with the Department of Aging in the Healthy U program to teach methods of self-managing chronic disease in order to stay on the job. The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) recommends more partnerships between RSC and ODA.



Director Miller (center) attends the GCPD Meeting.

The GCPD also created the Ohio Business Leadership Network (BLN), which has become a vital component of RSC's employment strategy. It was great to see BLN leaders mentoring YLF delegates on job networking skills and it wouldn't have been possible without Ohio GCPD.

It's ALL about Jobs!

Our *DisAbility Jobs Summit, Connecting & Building Partnerships*, is coming together in exciting fashion. I hope all *Weekly Focus* readers will join us at this *Summit* because it promises unequalled synergy as employers, consumers, service providers and government officials all gather to focus on creating good job opportunities for Ohioans with disabilities.



http://www.garrisonevents.com/disability_jobs_summit.php

