**Weekly Focus**

**October 26, 2012**

**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.

VR Achievements

Continuing my short series of RSC successes, I would like to focus on the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program this week. As I stated last week, setting goals and achieving them together as a team is one of the most rewarding experiences we can do. The VR story this past year is nothing short of phenomenal.

• **Compliance with standards and indicators**. How nice is it that we can report that we are overall compliant meeting 5 of 6 indicators the federal government uses to assess our VR program? It is great! Let me highlight just two of the standards and indicators and how VR staff has attained their goals. The first is the primary source of support. For people to move from government support to supporting themselves with income earned from employment is a tremendous change in culture. The pride that is associated with self-sufficiency is seen by staff daily and is humbling. The second is the total number of employment outcomes. For the first time since 2008, VR met or exceeded the number of outcomes from the previous year. A lot of hard work was done to make this a reality given many programmatic, budget and environmental changes that have occurred during this time period.

• **Resolved Casework Issues and Other Areas of Non-Compliance**. It is wonderful to be able to report to you that the corrective action plans from 2004 and 2008 have been successfully completed and we are now in compliance! I cannot overstate to each of you how much hard work has been done to achieve this goal and how proud I am to tell people that we are out from under these reports.

• **Administrative efficiencies**. The ability, in difficult budget times, to adjust operations to save money is a testament to the fortitude of field staff. We were able to save $1.2 million in rent payments by embedding staff in the communities you serve. This change allows you to be in more direct contact with individuals you serve. I know for some of you this was not an easy change to accomplish, and I sincerely thank you for your flexibility to get the job done.

• **Reduction of the wait list**. Governor Kasich told me early on that he wanted the wait list to be eliminated. I am so excited to see the numbers drop each and every month. To date, we have released 7,500 people from the wait list. That is 7,500 families that are now able to get the services they need to improve their economic self-sufficiency and achieve the basic mission of RSC.

• **Increase in plan writing**. I know that we have pushed to make sure that we are increasing the number of plans that are being written. I believe in persistence and things cannot change overnight but as long as our vision of what we want RSC to achieve is applied daily, we will see the results we desire. Plan writing is time-consuming and intensive in nature, but we have seen good results from these efforts which have increased over the past year. VR increased the number of plans written by 64.6% compared to last year. In FFY 2011, VR internal staff and external partners wrote 6,467 plans. In FFY 2012, staff wrote 10,009 plans.

I would be remiss if I did not point to the VR Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment being completed. The Ohio State University conducted a needs assessment to analyze the needs related to six disabilities. These data-driven recommendations will serve as the blueprint of the direction we need to head in the future to meet the needs of our service population. Couple this with the new fee schedule and we have two very powerful indicators of performance.

The Executive Order signed by Governor John R. Kasich, which became effective on October 1, 2012, authorized RSC to implement a fee schedule for providers of VR services. In the executive order, the Governor pointed out that RSC is the only agency of its kind in the country that allows providers to set their own rates for rehabilitation services for the individuals we serve. This move will help ensure consistent quality of service at a fair and standardized price.

I am very proud of these accomplishments to date. We have come a long way in a short amount of time. I will continue to push you out of your comfort zone because I believe this is where true growth and learning occur. It is in that spirit that I tell the VR staff great job! Now, let’s get on to making sure the things that we are doing are truly monumental for those we are serving.

Meet Therese Dyer

It is my pleasure to announce that we have a new Chief Financial Officer (CFO) onboard at RSC. Therese Dyer joined the RSC staff this past week and we are lucky to have her as a member of our executive team.

Well versed in state government, Therese comes to RSC after honing her skills at the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). Most recently, she was Administrator of the Office of Accounting with ODOT’s Division of Finance where she was responsible for administration of the department’s purchasing, accounts payable, inventory and cost accounting functions.

We are very fortunate at RSC to be able to attract top level staff that has the experience and knowledge to help continue to move our agency forward to better serve Ohioans with disabilities.

Please join me in welcoming Therese Dyer to RSC!

Project Search Meeting

RSC was privileged to host a Project SEARCH training session where I was able to update the capacity crowd attending on recent RSC successes.

As many of you know, Project SEARCH was developed at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

Beginning in 1996, Erin Riehle was Director of Cincinnati Children's Emergency Department and she felt that, because the hospital served individuals with developmental disabilities, it made sense that they should commit to hiring people in this group. Her brainstorm was to train people with developmental disabilities to fill some of the high-turnover, entry level positions in her department, which involved complex and systematic tasks such as stocking supply cabinets.

Susie Rutkowski, Co-Director and Education Specialist of Project SEARCH, led the productive meeting at RSC and attendees left energized and reinvigorated. Project SEARCH has grown from a single program site at Cincinnati Children's to over 200 sites across the United States and Canada, England, Scotland, and Australia.

A true partner with RSC’s mission, Project SEARCH's primary objective is to secure competitive employment for people with disabilities.

Picture caption:

*Director Miller (left) addresses attendees as Susie Rutkowski, Project SEARCH Co-Director and Education Specialist, looks on.*

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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**RSC’s YouTube website:**

[**https://www.youtube.com/user/OhioRSCTV**](https://www.youtube.com/user/OhioRSCTV)

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