

**Participant Focus Group Summary Report**

**First Quarter 2020**

**Dates of Participant Focus Group Meetings:**

Southeast (SE): January 16, 2020; Columbus City Schools’ Project Search at Life Care Alliance; 11 in attendance (8 participants, 1 Columbus City Schools’ teacher, 2 Functional Training Services’ job coaches); OOD Council Members David Baker from the Ohio Department of Education and Alison McKay from Disability Rights Ohio, along with Susan Pugh, OOD’s Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Deputy Director, were also in attendance.

East Central (EC): January 21, 2020; Trumbull Career & Technical Center; 5 in attendance (2 participants, 3 parents)

Northeast (NE): January 24, 2020; Cleveland Clinic; 13 in attendance (12 participants and 1 teacher)

Northwest (NW): January 29, 2020; Bowsher High School; 10 in attendance (7 participants, 1 parent, 1 Bowsher High School teacher and 1 Bowsher High School Assistant staff).

Southwest (SW): January 31, 2020; Butler Tech’s Project SEARCH at UC Health West Chester Hospital; 17 in attendance (12 participants, 1 Project SEARCH instructor, 2 Project SEARCH Skills Trainers, 1 Project SEARCH coordinator) along with OOD Council Member Jane E. Gerhardt and OOD Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Deputy Director Susan Pugh.

**Agenda Topics Covered Included**:

Statewide agenda topics:

* What type of experiences have you had with work and/or careers? When did you have your first experience with work?
* What services have helped you begin thinking about work or choosing career goals?
* Are you interested in certain kinds of jobs or in learning more about specific jobs? If so, which ones?
* How can OOD help you in finding and keeping a job? (Circle all that apply)
  + Help picking a college or training program to attend after high school graduation
  + Help getting ready for college
  + Help with my job search
  + Help learning a new job
  + Will not need any help
* What ideas do you have for OOD to improve our services to high school students?
* What is the best time for OOD to help you?
  + During the school day
  + After school
  + Weekends
  + Summer

**Feedback Received by Area:**

**Southeast Area**

Prior to reviewing the focus group questions, the attendees and students introduced themselves. The students used story sticks, which they had created, to help with their introductions and to share the history of their work experiences. After introductions, SE Area Manager, Kelly Rodriguez, explained the purpose of the focus group. Due to the students receiving the agenda ahead of time, the teacher shared that the group had practiced answering the questions. Kelly Rodriguez and Rob Schaller, OOD VRS, took turns asking the focus group questions. Students shared their answers and, as needed, they received prompting from their teacher and job coach.

What type of experiences have you had with work and/or careers? When did you have your first experience with work?

* The students reported the following work experiences:
  + Project Search, which has allowed them to experience a variety of food service production jobs.
    - Project Search is a school based job readiness training service in which OOD partners with a local school, community rehabilitation program provider, and a local business that allows students to participate in training and work experiences. This Project Search is a partnership between OOD, Columbus City Schools, Functional Training Services, and Life Care Alliance.
  + The majority of students participated in at least one summer youth work experience. Through these experiences, the students worked at a variety of businesses including Ronald McDonald House, Easton Town Center, a Hilton hotel, Life Care Alliance, a YMCA, and a local library.
  + Several students participated in a Columbus City Schools’ work training program at Grant and Riverside hospitals where they learned environmental services and dishwashing.
  + Two students participated in Columbus City Schools’ work training program with Goodwill Columbus where they learned home repairs.
* Six of the students reported that a Summer Youth Work Experience through OOD was their first work experience.
* One student stated that Columbus City Schools’ work training program with Goodwill Columbus was their first work experience.
* One student reportedly moved to the state of Ohio last year and, therefore, Project Search is their first work experience.

What services have helped you begin thinking about work or choosing career goals?

* The students agreed that Project Search has assisted them in thinking about work. This service includes classroom instructional time with a Columbus City Schools’ teacher. The group explained that this instructional time has helped them to think about work and they’re learning the following:
  + Money management
  + How to create and respond to emails
  + How to complete online job search
  + How to complete online job applications
  + Nutrition information
  + Meditation
  + Self-Care
  + Work vocabulary
  + Resumes
  + References
  + Communication
  + Team building

Are you interested in certain kinds of jobs or in learning more about specific jobs? If so, which ones?

* The students reported having interest in the following types of jobs and employers:
  + Clothing or shoe retail, fitting room attendant, or stocking at a business such as TJ Maxx
  + Cafeteria food service at a hospital or at Whole Foods
  + Dietary aide at a hospital or nursing home
  + Janitorial work at a hospital, nursing home, or university
  + Stocking at a grocery store

How can OOD help you in finding and keeping a job?

* The students reported that they would need help with job search and with learning a new job.

What ideas do you have for OOD to improve our services to high school students?

* The students did not share areas for improvement.
* The teacher shared that during this school year, some of the students have been transferred to new counselors and it’s been difficult for the students to learn to work with a new counselor. OOD acknowledged that there have more staff changes than normal this past year. Rob Schaller also shared that learning to interact with a new person will help the students develop important communication and personal interaction skills necessary for the work place.

What is the best time for OOD to help you?

* The students and teacher shared that after school and during the summer are the best times for participant meetings.

**East Central Area**

EC Area Manager, Marc Manheim held the Participant Focus Group at the Trumbull Career & Technical Center in Warren, Ohio. Other OOD employees in attendance included Ashlee Iannucci, VR Supervisor, Brian Eskridge, VR Supervisor and Tara Withrow, AP4. Marc welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the purpose of the OOD Council and the importance that the local Participant Focus Groups play in providing input and feedback to the OOD Council. He also reviewed the mission of OOD and the transition services that the agency provides to eligible individuals. The participants were provided with the agenda ahead of time so they would be able to think about their responses in advance.

What types of experiences have you had with work and/or careers? When did you have your first work experience?

* + At Shepherd of the Valley Nursing Home working in housekeeping and helping in the kitchen.
  + At a hotel doing housekeeping, laundry, landscaping, and working at the pool.
  + At TCTC making smoothies, doing laundry, working in the mailroom, and working at the car wash.
  + At Giant Eagle doing carts, bagging, and stocking.
  + At TCTC working at the car wash.
  + Participants reported work experiences have occurred during the summer.
  + Participants reported they have been working at TCTC during the school year.

What services have helped you begin thinking about work or choosing career goals?

* + Working at TCTC in the mailroom.
  + Job training that was completed last summer.
  + Working at TCTC in the car wash.

Are you interested in certain kinds of jobs or in learning more about specific jobs? If so, which ones?

* + Nursing Homes
  + Dishwashers/Dish room
  + Working with people – maybe in an activities setting in a nursing home
  + Doing laundry/working in laundry room
  + Bath & Body Works – stocking and fronting merchandise
  + Dealership or working with big trucks
  + Semi-Truck Driver

How can OOD help you in finding and keeping a job? (Circle all that apply)

1. help picking a college or training program to attend after high school graduation
2. help getting ready for college
3. help with my job search
4. help learning a new job
5. will not need any help

* C and D – Would like help getting a job at a nursing home and help figuring out any problems with the job.
* D – Will need help with training at a new job.

What ideas do you have for OOD to improve our services to high school students?

* + Nothing.
  + Help with resources available outside of OOD – what can be offered after high school.
  + Help getting a job.
  + Transportation services – this is a big barrier.
  + Happy with the services received. Will be working in summer experience this year.
  + Guidance on what services to get from which agency.

What is the best time for OOD to help you? (Circle all that apply)

1. During the school day
2. After school
3. Weekends
4. Summer

* A, B, C, D.
* B.
* B and D for son.

**Northeast Area**

NE Area Manager, Traci Conkling held the Participant Focus Group at the Cleveland Clinic Project Search site at the hospital’s main campus. Natalie Myers, VR Supervisor, assisted in the event. Traci welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the purpose and the importance that the local Participant Focus Groups play in the provision and types of services OOD provides.

After introductions, Traci reviewed the agenda and set discussion and time expectations. Due to the students receiving the agenda ahead of time, the teacher shared that the group had practiced answering the questions. Students shared their answers and, as needed, they received prompting from their teacher and from Natalie. Students also used their telephones to assist them in answering questions.

What type of experiences have you had with work and/or careers? When did you have your first experience with work?

* Participation in OOD’s Summer Youth Program
* Owning and running my own business
* Volunteer experiences through the school (Ex. Walgreens, Bon Appetite, local food bank, Daves)
* Working at grocery store
* Worked at Marshalls
* All reported that work experiences started between the ages of 15-17 and their first experiences where unpaid volunteer experiences through the school (listed above)

What services have helped you begin thinking about work or choosing career goals?

* Working with my teacher on paperwork and schedules
* Recycling
* Working at a grocery store
* Going online and searching for jobs, signing paperwork, and interviewing
* Work at school with teachers
* Working at Marshalls
* Youth Leadership Forum
* Being part of Future Business Leaders of America

Are you interested in certain kinds of jobs or in learning more about specific jobs? If so, which ones?

* Security
* Camp counselor or mentor
* Helping people with disabilities
* Food business, becoming a chef and owning my own restaurant
* Patient transport
* Food services
* Recycling
* Teaching
* ASL Interpreter
* Office work
* Cleaning

How can OOD help you in finding and keeping a job?

* Out of the responses given, all participants agreed that they need OOD’s help. Below is the order from most identified to the least:
  + Help with my job search
  + Help getting ready for college
  + Help picking a college or training program to attend after high school graduation
  + Help learning a new job

What ideas do you have for OOD to improve our services to high school students?

* Providing transportation
* Providing a car to take their drivers test in
* Learning how to save money for a car
* Help with securing my own place
* Providing more in terms of job skills

What is the best time for OOD to help you?

1. During the school day
2. After school
3. Weekends
4. Summer

* Number one response (41% of group) was **C**, followed by **B,** **A**, and then **D**

**Northwest Area**

NW Area Manager, Curt Morman held the Participant Focus Group at Bowsher High School in Toledo, Ohio. Other OOD employees in attendance included Amber Walker VRC, Jessica McClain VRC and Jennifer Heck VRC. Curt welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the purpose of the OOD Council and the importance that the local Participant Focus Groups play in providing input and feedback to the OOD Council. He also reviewed the mission of OOD and the transition services that the agency provides to eligible individuals. The participants were provided with the agenda ahead of time so they would be able to think about their responses in advance.

What type of experiences have you had with work and/or careers? When did you have your first experience with work?

* Worked at the Toledo Hospital with my school job training program for two years.
* Did sports film for the sports team.
* Worked at Goodwill last year.
* Worked at McDonald’s
* Worked at KFC as a team member and Popeyes as a crew member.
* Worked at T J Maxx.

What services have helped you begin thinking about work or choosing career goals?

* Job coaches at school and counselor from OOD.
* Being at Goodwill and being in an open environment.
* Teachers, on-line sites and TV commercials.

Are you interested in certain kinds of jobs or in learning more about specific jobs? If so, which ones?

* Work in retail.
* Interested in photography.
* Work at Real Seafood restaurant.
* Veterinary tech
* Factory job affiliated with sports.

How can OOD help you in finding and keeping a job?

* Below is the order from most identified to the least:
  + Help with my job search
  + Help learning a new job
  + Help picking a college or training program to attend after high school graduation
  + Help getting ready for college
  + will not need any help

What ideas do you have for OOD to improve our services to high school students?

* Would have liked to have started with OOD in the 8th grade.
* More in-school services, more support with vocational.
* Flyers on some of the jobs from OOD.

What is the best time for OOD to help you?

* The students shared during the school day, after school or summer were the best times.

**Southwest Area**

SW Area Manager, Mark Fay held the Participant Focus Group at UC West Chester Hospital, meeting with the Project SEARCH interns from Butler Tech High School. Other OOD employees in attendance included VRS Jerica Kruse and VRC Sarah Stanutz. Mark began the meeting with a review of the purpose and importance of the OOD Council and the role of the feedback from these local Participant Focus Groups. He also reviewed the mission of OOD and the transition services that the agency provides to eligible individuals. The participants were provided with the agenda ahead of time so they would be able to think about their responses in advance.

What types of experiences have you had with work/careers? When did you have your first experience with work?

* + Several reported they started in Project LIFE (9/12 had come from the Project LIFE program)
  + Many reported part-time jobs, such as SanMar, Wetherington Country Club, Walgreens, and Chick Fil A
    - The students who worked at SanMar and Wetherington were offered positions through working rotations there with Project LIFE
  + Several reported they participated in Summer Youth Work Experiences and named sites such as YMCA, Tractor Supply, and Eli’s. One student reported “it was fun!”
  + One talked about a work study experience he had at Hamilton County ESC. He went one day per week during his senior year of high school and worked as a file clerk.
  + One discussed a previous job held at a nursing facility that was his favorite, and he talked about how he liked the environment and really enjoyed the different people he worked with.

What services have helped you begin thinking about work or choosing career goals?

* + Job coaching: always going to learn new things, need help improving speed, job coach feedback can be very beneficial for these things
    - “I work with [skills trainer]. She helps me when I need help.”
  + Having a checklist: follows checklist, “know what I have done and what I don’t;” helps remember what needs to be done, especially important when learning a new
  + Assistance purchasing work clothing: one student noted that OOD has helped him get appropriate shoes for work that meet his physical needs, noted that assistance getting appropriate work clothing and uniforms is important and helpful
  + Job development: help finding a job, “when we get to that, it’s going to be very helpful for a lot of us…especially when you haven’t worked very much”
  + Making presentations: making presentations for meetings and being able to talk to the team about their jobs
    - Employment Planning Meetings (EPM), done every six weeks, students present on job, likes, dislikes, strengths, goals, transportation
  + Work experience (SYWE, Project LIFE, Project SEARCH): get to see different jobs and learn what might like to do
  + Interviewing to get into rotations: “good practice for job interviews,” “have had two interviews recently, hope I made a good impression”
    - Interns interview with the hospital departments prior to rotations, and the departments choose their interns.
    - Rotation acts as a three-month interview, may be able to get a job in previous rotation
  + Being able to put Project SEARCH on a resume when applying for jobs, “it’s helpful”
  + Learning soft skills
    - “Our instructor shows us that not every boss is going to be nice. The fact that she points it out to us is helpful.”
    - “I view myself as very lazy, but when I started my first rotation pushed myself to work hard. I realized that I can actually have a good work ethic.”
    - Talking to people working in their departments and learning about social etiquette
    - Students mentioned working on learning patience and other soft skills
  + Learning how to drive: student currently in Pre-Driver’s Training is excited about learning to drive

Are you interested in certain kinds of jobs or in learning more about specific jobs? If so, which ones?

* + Students noted interest in the following types of jobs: web design, stocking, food service, cleaning, self-employment, and fairs/festivals
    - Stocking was mentioned by about half of the participants
    - Two or three mentioned food service, and Food and Nutrition Services was reported as a popular rotation earlier in the discussion.
  + Several students mentioned that they had talked to other students that worked in a specific kind of job, such as stocking or food service, to learn more about the job.

How can OOD help you in finding and keeping a job?

* + Helping with looking at college and finding college may be helpful who are students who are still in high school
  + May need assistance with finding apartments and housing
    - Instructor explained that this is more something that will be covered by county board of DD
  + Responses on returned surveys (many students only circled one):
    - Help picking a college or training program to attend after high school: 2
    - Help getting ready for college: 2
    - Help with my job search: 7
    - Help with learning a job: 4
    - Will not need any help: 0

What ideas do you have for OOD to improve our services to high school students?

* + Make Summer Youth Work Experience longer – maybe full summer?
  + Help starting a small business – talk about self-employment more with students
  + Providing food during Project SEARCH, students in Food and Nutrition Services rotation get food credit, would be nice for all interns to be able to access
    - Instructor noted that Butler Tech is looking into this and talking to WCH about it
    - Other students noted that having to pack lunch teaches good habits, not buying soda every day, budgeting for lunch money
  + Teach students with disabilities about managing priorities, time, and being flexible on time, work more on abstract concepts
  + Being able to help potential future interns better understand the program – Student ambassador?
    - Having students talk more about Project LIFE and SEARCH and being more involved in the recruitment process – both in current LIFE and high schools
    - A few students talked to another Project LIFE class earlier this year about Project SEARCH and their experience.
    - Coordinator noted that this is something she intends to include students in more

What is the best time for OOD to help you? (not all students circled a response)

* + During the school day: 4
  + After school: 2
  + Weekends: 1
  + Summer: 3

**Area Manager Follow Up Items:**

Southeast Area: No follow-up items at this time.

East Central Area: No follow-up items at this time.

Northeast Area: No follow-up items at this time.

Northwest Area:

Southwest Area: No follow-up items at this time.

**Upcoming Participant Focus Group Dates**:

SE: April 2020; BSVI Focus Group; Date and location to be determined

EC: April 2020; BSVI Focus Group; Date and location to be determined

NE: April 2020; BSVI Focus Group; Date and location to be determined

NW: April 2020; BSVI Focus Group; Date and location to be determined

SW: April 2020; BSVI Focus Group; Date and location to be determined