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**Vocational Rehabilitation**

**Postsecondary Training Analysis and Report**

**August 2021**

**Overview:**

OOD has taken a comprehensive approach to collect information about our postsecondary initiatives, including the College2Careers (C2C) program over the last year. The goal in conducting these activities was to evaluate the effectiveness of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services provided to individuals with disabilities participating in postsecondary training, the individual’s satisfaction with the VR process, and their recommendations for improvement.

**Activities:**

1. **Survey:**

Feedback from C2C staff, school staff, and students showed that students are seeking additional support, structure, and guidance, especially during the pandemic. In an effort to meet their needs and to plan our events for the spring semester, we surveyed all College2Careers students. In this survey we solicited feedback from the students about how they learned about C2C, what C2C events they participated in during Fall semester, what events they would be interested in for spring semester, what information they are interested in learning more about, and how they would like to receive the information. The survey was sent to approximately 400 students. We received 75 responses back, which is a 19% response rate.

Results:

* The majority of students learned about College2Careers from their Disability/Accessibility services office or their OOD Counselor.
* Out of all the C2C events (Information Sessions, Facebook Live events, Virtual Interviews, Mock Interviews) most participated in mock interviewing.
* The results didn’t show that there was a specific preference in type of event to attend.
* Of all topics suggested, students expressed the most interest in learning about:
  + Employers with TAP (Tuition Assistance Programs)
  + COVID impact on colleges/universities (majors, enrollment, online learning, accessibility)
  + COVID impact - Workforce and Employment
  + Disability Specific – Neurodiversity

1. **Statewide College2Careers Leadership Meetings:**

OOD hosted two statewide meetings this year where the Directors of each of the Disability/Accessibility Services Offices and Career Service Offices from each of the College2Careers schools met to discuss the program, identifying progress made, challenges and how to make progress.

Feedback Received:

* In the beginning, it was difficult to know how/when to refer students to the C2C Counselor and how to market C2C
* Schools appreciate the counselors being able to offer individualized support and wrap around services to help students navigate Higher Education and find internships/employment
* Schools appreciate counselors providing tools and resources for students as they have sought out structure and content during the pandemic (specifically the Career Development Toolkit, Information Sessions, Mock Interviews and Virtual Hiring Events)
* Students desire flexibility of in-person and virtual options in terms of class scheduling and receiving support services
* Students desire different forms of technology to assist with classes and into employment

1. **Participant Focus Group:**

OOD reached out to individuals directly to determine how we are supporting individuals participating in Postsecondary training, their satisfaction with the VR process, and their recommendations. The sample size for this focus group was 100 individuals, 20 per area of the state. Of that 100, 51 were College2Careers participants and 49 were served on other VR caseloads. The method of collecting information was through designated support staff in each area who contacted program participants by phone during the month of June 2021.

Overall, for all questions, there was no significant distinction in responses between the five areas of the state. The responses were consistent throughout each area. There was also no significant distinction between College2Careers responses and non-College2Careers responses.

Results:

**Question 1 – How did you hear about College2Careers/OOD VR Services?**

**Question 2 - When working with your OOD VR counselor to make decisions about your case, were you given information that helped you make decision (s)?**

**Question 2a - If yes, what was helpful? (Out of 93 Yes responses)**

* Guidance, information, answered questions, tips
* Set realistic goals
* Assessments to help decide on a major/career path
* Financial assistance (gas, tuition, books, driver’s training) and financial aid assistance
* Internship, resume, and job search assistance

**Question 2B - What additional information would have been helpful to you?**

* Only need financial assistance
* Not sure/nothing/not that I can think of/not applicable
* Touch base more often
* Information about accommodations and different career paths

**Question 3 - Have you participated in any Virtual Hiring Events, Mock Interviews, Interviews with employers, Internships, work experiences/jobs, other activities?**

**Of the 51 College2Careers Responses: Of the 49 Served On Other Caseloads Responses:**

**Question 3a – If yes, what was helpful?**

* Extra practice/preparation
* Gain insight
* Support
* Getting resume out there
* Internships have led to work
* Got hired

**Question 3b – What additional experiences would have been helpful to you?**

* Can’t think of any/none/not applicable
* More about services that are available after school
* Connecting with my counselor sooner

**Question 4 - What ideas do you have to help improve our services to college students with disabilities?**

* Assist with communicating with college/university (disability services) and getting them to respond
* Communicate more often
* Nothing/Do great work

**Question 5 - Please share with us any comments that you would like about your experience with OOD**

**From the East-Central Area:**

* “Overall, it has been great, especially growing up where I grew up and loosing vision. We did not have a ton of money, but to be able to see the different prices and options for assistive tech.... It was fantastic to have assistive tech. It really is life changing.”
* “Without OOD I wouldn’t be able to do what I’m doing.”
* “My counselor’s communication actual wellbeing and future as a worker and goals.”

**From the Northeast Area**

* “Outstanding experience with the Agency.”
* “My counselor is really good with responding to emails within 24 hours and I really appreciate that. My VRC has been very helpful with the field of study I wanted to be part of and OOD has been great with supporting me through this.”
* “The experience with OOD has been life-changing and greatly improved their quality of life.”

**From the Northwest Area:**

* “Thanks for all the help, I don't think I would be where I am now without the support of people who care about me and want to see me succeed.”
* “My experiences have been terrific. My counselor is extremely knowledgeable and helpful. She has inspired and helped me. I rate her number 1. Thanks for the opportunities that OOD provides to me.”
* “I would be lost without it, I had nowhere to turn. It saved my life.”

**From the Southeast Area:**

* “I was super scared when I first started it, even put it off like two semesters. All that worry just to realize your rep was there to help me whole time.”
* “I think I've had a better experience going through C2C than when I was with OOD before. I guess because it is easier to set goals and plan.”
* “It has been great working with VRC & OOD. This has been a huge help financially while going to school & one less thing to worry about. This experience will not be taken for granted or all the other support provided from OOD.”

**From the Southwest Area:**

* “My VRC went above and beyond the call of duty. They were very helpful at every turn. My VRC was very encouraging and took the time to talk with me about concerns and took time to encourage me. She showed/proved to me that I was more than just a number.”
* “I would recommend the C2C program to anyone that needs help with learning how to manage their behavior in the workplace, socially and when dealing with other people.”
* “I like having a VR counselor, because I feel like I have someone in my corner and am not so alone. I like being given direction, because after high school you lose all structure. I function better with structure.”

**Next Steps:**

Overall, OOD’s postsecondary services impact a variety of individuals in a lot of ways. The information collected from each of these activities will be used to help improve our programs and services for individuals with disabilities. Based upon analysis of the feedback some specific action items were determined:

* Incorporate the additional topics suggested into the Career Development Toolkit resources
* Provide guidance to schools on how/when to refer individuals with disabilities to OOD
* Provide resources for marketing C2C to schools
* Continue focus on outreach to students with disabilities and growing the Ohio College2Careers program
* Evaluate how/what technology can be used by students with disabilities to improve services/employment outcomes
* Update policies/procedures to streamline and clarify points of the process for individuals with disabilities and staff
* Update Contribution Worksheet to make it more user-friendly/understandable
* Conduct training for internal staff on postsecondary policies and best practices
* Continue to increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities by researching in-demand careers in each area of the state and growing our employer partner relationships to promote advocacy