

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD, INC.
OF
MAHONING AND COLUMBIANA COUNTIES**

Individuals with Disabilities Committee Meeting
January 13, 2022
9:00am
OhioMeansJobs Center Mahoning County

Committee Members Present: Ed Emerick, Brian Eskridge, Susie Kooser, Erich Offenburg, Marcy Patton, and Danica Woodard for Joe Caruso
Committee Members Absent: Shirley Bowald, Rick Fryda, Matt Golladay, Brenda Heidinger, and Troy Rhoades
Adjunct Members: Ashlee Iannucci and Jennifer Strank
WDB Members: Melissa Maiorano
Board Staff: Mary Ann Kochalko and Sharlene Senediak
Guests: Ron Klonowski

Mr. Eskridge, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:05am after verification of a quorum, and introductions took place.

Approval of October 14, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Motion: To approve the October 14, 2021 meeting minutes as prepared.
Motion made by: Marcy Patton
Seconded by: Ed Emerick
Discussion: None
Motion approved.

OOD's Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment 2021

Various barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities, as well as the impact of COVID-19 and challenges for employers to fill positions, have been discussed at previous meetings. OOD completed its 2021 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment which can be accessed at <https://ood.ohio.gov/about-us/statistics2/2021-comprehensive-statewide-needs-assessment>.

An excerpt from the assessment was provided, which shows the barriers individuals with disabilities are seeing as they try to enter the workforce now. The top barrier perceived by individuals with disabilities is employer attitudes toward people with disabilities. Employer attitudes have always been a concern, and OOD offers a tremendous amount of resources to educate employers and employees, that individuals with disabilities are capable of working in positions with or without accommodations.

OOD employer resources can be accessed at <https://ood.ohio.gov/information-for-employers/employer-resources>. Services are free for employers.

Guest Speaker – Ron Klonowski, Business Relations Specialist (BRS) – Disability Etiquette, Windmills Training and Inclusive Employer Resources

Ron Klonowski provided an overview of business resources available through OOD. OOD can tour an employer facility and offer suggestions how it can be made more ADA accessible for employees.

Webinars can also be accessed on the OOD website for free. The “Gift of Talent” webinar addresses why employers should hire individuals with disabilities and how to assist individuals with disabilities so they can progress within the organization. Given the emerging need for employers to fill positions, the individuals with disabilities population is the largest untapped resource to meet hiring needs.

The College to Career program provides an OOD counselor on a college campus to assist those students who may need additional assistance. The counselor can also work with a BRS to find an internship or placement for the student. Bill Koch is the OOD counselor for YSU.

Disability etiquette/awareness training is also available to employers and can include the national Windmills training, which is comprised of 12 modules or in-house trainings. Under the Windmills training modules, “The Story” module usually serves as an ice breaker, and the most popular module is “Pick a Disability,” which makes people aware of hidden biases. The “Fact or Fiction” module is focused on the HR aspect and is conducted as a survey to determine if certain job duties can be completed by an individual with disabilities. The “Profiles” module focuses on preconceived notions regarding which jobs would be a good or bad fit for an individual with disabilities.

A popular in-house training is “Disability Etiquette” which was designed to inform people how to be comfortable in an environment working with individuals with disabilities. The training goes over do’s and don’ts, terminology, and concerns for specific disabilities. “Getting on Board with Inclusive Hiring” is another training focused on HR and is a life-size gameboard. Players are given profiles that contain disabilities and advance based on whether or not they are qualified for a job description. “Game Changers” is another training that discusses tools available for people with disabilities to assist them with completing their work.

Training can be customized to the audience, and all training is free. Information about employer training and resources can be shared at a WDB meeting and Chamber events.

DOL Opioid Grant Update

The State may be extending the Opioid Grant 3 again, and a decision will be made by March. To date, 125 customers have been served under the grant, and 77 received training services.

RETAIN Grant Update

Ohio received \$18.8 million to participate in Phase 2 of the RETAIN grant. Phase 1 of the RETAIN grant project focused on a return-to-work/stay-at-work strategy for employed individuals who were injured off-the job. For Phase 2, Mercy Health will be targeting underserved populations and has already contacted OOD to brainstorm ways to serve individuals with disabilities. Additional diagnoses will be considered, which will go beyond the orthopedic injuries in Phase 1. Incentives may also be offered to employers who participate in the program. The Area 17 business services team will continue to recruit employers to pledge their participation in the RETAIN program.

Member Updates

OOD – As part of OOD’s “Jobs for Recovery” program, a partnership has been established with Youngstown Municipal Court to have a full-time OOD counselor present to work on various dockets. A job developer will eventually be hired to work with the counselor.

CCMHRSB – The Columbiana County Port Authority is starting a new initiative called Recovery to Work which focuses on increasing the number of employers that hire, support, and retain people in recovery. Subcommittees for the initiative are being developed, and efforts will be made to connect all partners to work together on this initiative.

Other Business/Next Steps

Guest Invite Ideas – Guest ideas continue to be requested, and suggestions can be forwarded to Brian for consideration. Guest ideas can be previous participants or representatives from other agencies.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 10:25am.