

# WEEKLY FOCUS

*The mission of the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency is to ensure individuals with disabilities achieve quality employment, independence and disability determination outcomes through integrated services, partnerships and innovation.*

## Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) passed the U.S. House of Representatives last week, after Senate approval last month. It is presently on President Obama's desk awaiting his signature. The legislation, a reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act, seeks to modernize and improve existing federal workforce development programs, help workers attain skills for 21st century jobs, and provide support to people with disabilities to enter and remain in competitive, integrated job settings.

According to the House Education and the Workforce Committee, the legislation:

- Streamlines a confusing maze of programs
- Promotes skills training for in-demand jobs
- Reduces administrative costs and unnecessary bureaucracy
- Delivers strong accountability over the use of taxpayer dollars

The passage of WIOA reflects a compromise between competing legislation in the two chambers: the SKILLS Act (H.R. 803), which passed the House of Representatives in March of 2013, and the Workforce Investment Act of 2013 (S. 1356), which passed the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee in July of 2013.

The legislation passed with overwhelming bipartisan support with a vote of 415-to-6 by the U.S. House of Representatives and 95-to-3 in the U.S. Senate last month. Federal workforce development laws had not been updated since 1998.

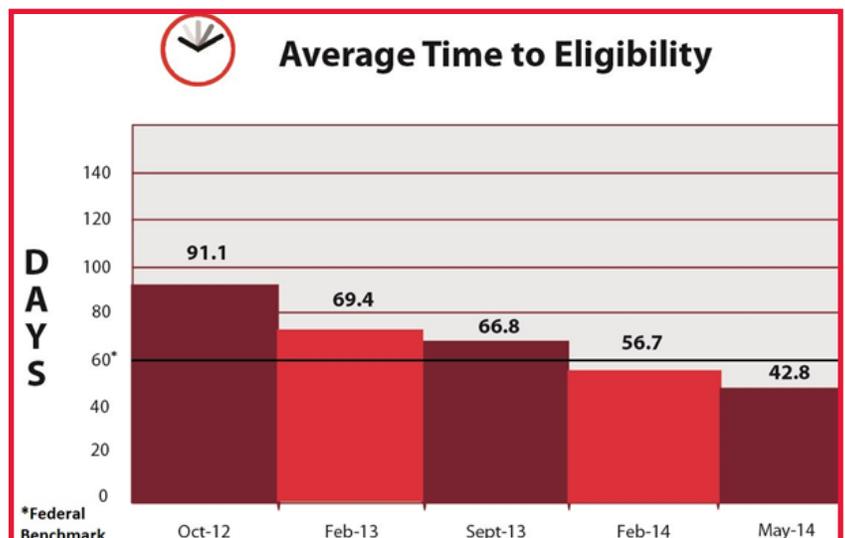
OOD Staff are currently reviewing this legislation to determine what impact it will have for Ohio. Upon initial review, the legislation reinforces OOD's focus on services to transition youth and our focus on business engagement to ensure quality employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

## Timeframe from Application to Eligibility Continues to Improve

During a series of "Café Conversations" several years ago, OOD received Feedback from individuals with disabilities and their families indicating that accessing vocational rehabilitation (VR) services was a time consuming and daunting process to navigate. When we began to measure the time it took to process applications for services and render an eligibility decision, it took an average of 129 days. Federal regulations require that eligibility decisions be made within 60 days whenever possible, so Ohio was far exceeding this timeframe.

OOD committed to a goal of not only meeting this federal benchmark but exceeding it by reducing the average time for eligibility decisions to 30 days. In December 2011, OOD enlisted the help of the LeanOhio Office in order to streamline the process and meet this aggressive goal. Through a Kaizen event, and using Lean Six Sigma methodologies, process improvements were implemented that resulted in significant reductions in eligibility decision timeframes.

Individuals who received eligibility decisions in April of this year saw the wait time reduced to an average of



42.8 days; an improvement of twelve weeks! In 2011 OOD was nearly double the federal benchmark of 60 days and now in FFY 2014 is under that requirement and continues to trend downward.

## OOD Commissioners Seek Award Nominations

The OOD Commissioners are seeking nominations for two awards, that are presented to honor the service of individuals, who significantly contribute to assisting individuals with disabilities.

### Ben Bonanno Disability Advocate Award:

OOD has established the Ben Bonanno Disability Advocate Award to honor outstanding advocacy accomplishments by non-employees of OOD. Ben Bonanno was a former OOD Commissioner and an unwavering advocate. The Ben Bonanno Disability Advocate Award, recognizes a person whose advocacy efforts have significantly improved the employment possibilities of Ohioans with disabilities, in a manner that is consistent with OOD’s mission. The deadline date for submitting nominations is July 25, 2014.

### Denise Joanne Weisenborn Service Award:

The Denise Joanne Weisenborn Service Award, honors non-employees of OOD, who provide outstanding services to Ohioans with disabilities to make their participation in society more meaningful. This award has been established in memory of Denise Weisenborn, who served as an OOD Commissioner from 1997 to 2006. The deadline date for submitting nominations is July 25, 2014.

The Nomination Forms can be found on OOD’s website at: <http://ood.ohio.gov/ood-home/about-us/ood-commissioners/commissioners-awards>.

Forms can be e-mailed to Shirley Marchi at [shirley.marchi@ood.ohio.gov](mailto:shirley.marchi@ood.ohio.gov) or mailed to Shirley Marchi, Community Relations Liaison, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, 150 E. Campus View Blvd., Columbus, OH 43235. Questions may be directed to Shirley Marchi at 614.438.1477 or e-mail.

## Governor’s Council on People with Disabilities Annual Awards

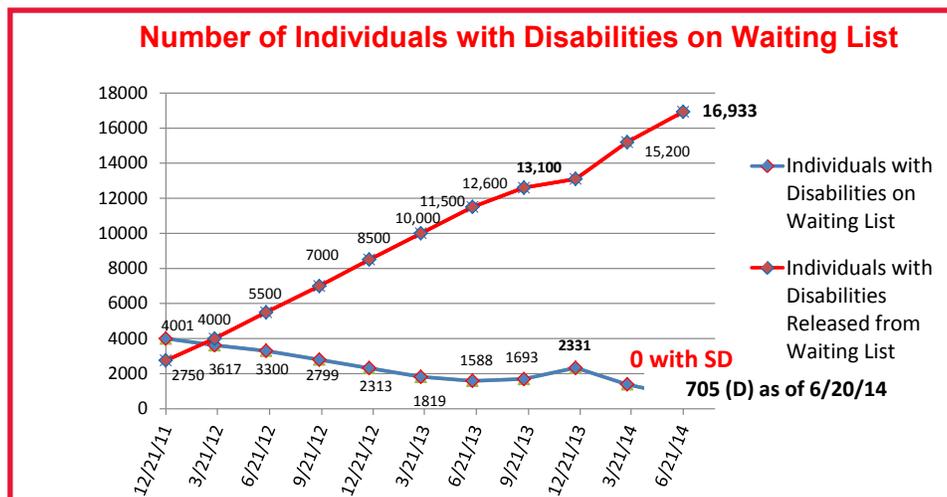


The Governor’s Council on People with Disabilities (GCPD) annually recognizes businesses, groups and individuals who have significantly contributed to employment opportunities and community involvement for people with disabilities. These awards offer inspiration to both the public and private sectors to realize ability rather than disability as the most important factor in employment and community inclusion.

GCPD would very much like to hear from you about the leaders in your community. Please take a moment to review the awards on the website (<http://ood.ohio.gov/ood-home/about-us/governor's-council-on-people-with-disabilities>, dropdown Awards) and nominate a community leader, organization or business for the appropriate recognition. This year the awards will be presented on October 16, 2014 in the Atrium at The Ohio Statehouse. Please contact Donna Foster at [donna.foster@ood.ohio.gov](mailto:donna.foster@ood.ohio.gov) if you have any questions.

Nominations are being accepted for the following awards: Accessible Medical Practice, Employer of the Year, Best Practices, Advocacy, Legislator of the Year, Maureen Fitzgerald Leadership, and Karla Lortz Scholarship.

**DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS IS JULY 31, 2014**



For more information or questions on stories in this publication, please call the Office of Communications at 614.438.1476.

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