Introduction

Welcome to HireGround! Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities produces this newsletter for our vocational rehabilitation (VR) professional audience. We hope that these stories, best practices and practical tips will be of value to you as we continue our relationship and work with participants. Our goal is to achieve quality employment, independence and disability determination outcomes through our integrated services, partnerships and innovation.

Do you ever recall something from an earlier HireGround that you would like to access again? OOD has posted past issues starting January 2014 online. All are available both in PDF and text versions at ood.ohio.gov/About-Us/Media-Center/HireGround-Newsletter.

Disability Community Opportunities and Announcements

Free Blindness Technology Course

A new free online course called “An Introduction to Technology Accessibility in the Workplace” has been added to the National Technical Assistance Center (NTAC) website. Featured are different types of technology that are traditionally inaccessible, including additions and modifications that can be made to improve access for someone with a visual impairment. Screen readers and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phones are evaluated, and continuing education credits are available. See this and additional courses from NTAC - Mississippi State University at www.ntac.blind.msstate.edu/courses/.

Free Webinars Useful for Transition Students and Professionals

Think College offers a series of six webinars this academic year, and we invite you to attend. Topics focus on inclusive academic access, financial planning for college, employment supports, and higher education and disability policy. Registration is FREE and includes live participation as well as a link to the recorded webinar for use after the event. Register at events-na6.adobeconnect.com/content/connect/c1/839220836/en/events/catalog.

Expanding Transportation Options

Uber is now operating in 400 cities in 70 countries. The company is experimenting with new services such as UberEats, driverless vehicles, couriers and UberPool (sharing a ride with another passenger for a discounted fare). This summer, Uber...
launched a new accessibility site for people with disabilities, providing a central place for finding information for both riders and drivers, including policies and requirements of drivers. Go to accessibility.uber.com/.

Sprint and Special Needs Customer Service
Sprint is putting emphasis on ensuring it has accessible devices, affordable plans and leading service for customers with disabilities. Sprint now has a dedicated toll-free number for customers with disabilities to call for technical assistance, call 1-855-885-7568. As an additional reminder, Sprint Relay helps address the communication challenges facing people with speech and/or hearing disabilities when they dial 711.

Application for Homestead Exemption Now Available All Year
Senior citizens and Ohioans with disabilities who are property owners may now apply for the homestead exemption year round. House Bill 166 passed this summer and eliminates the filing deadline for the homestead exemption. This allows those who qualify to shield up to $25,000 of the market value of their home from taxation. For additional information and an application, see fiscalofficer.cuyahogacounty.us/en-us/homestead-exemption-faq.aspx.

(Artist Spotlight: Randy Jones
Born and raised in Columbus, Randy Jones received a B.F.A. from the Columbus College of Art & Design in 1982. He has participated in several Ohio galleries and his work was shown at the Apple Computer Expo in Paris.

“My digital paintings reflect what I respond to. There is joy in the arrangement of design elements and colors within a composition. Familiar, comfortable objects like fruit or books express the fragility of the moment, but they also become something eternal and timeless, frozen forever in the picture. The more we look, the more we see. Most importantly we see that transient beauty can become transformed consciously and subconsciously. It is awareness of response. What do objects on a shelf become for us? Most of all, my work is therapy for me and an essential part of my recovery.”

Are You AWARE?
Tools Designed to Assist AWARE Users
By Rebecca Halstead, AWARE Business Coordinator
When updating a case in AWARE, have you ever asked yourself, “How do I do this?” There is a tool to assist AWARE users to find the answer to just such questions and more. This tool is called the AWARE manual. To access it, go to the extranet page and select the AWARE link.

On the AWARE page you can find Resources, Current Release Updates, Links to Access AWARE, AWARE Hours, Known Issues and Future Release Updates.

In this issue, we are going to focus on the AWARE manual found under the resources section. This manual can assist you with entering information into AWARE. As AWARE
and its processes are updated, we strive to keep the manual up-to-date to provide VR staff with the tools needed to serve our participants. Here are some examples on how to use this helpful tool:

- You may find yourself with a college case and need a refresher on how to complete the Cost Scenario and Financial Needs Assessment screens. In the AWARE manual, you can use the find feature (select control and F on your keyboard); and in the search bar under navigation, type in a service key word like Post-Secondary to find the information needed.

- If you are a new VR staff member looking for a reminder on how to release a payment, go to the table of contents and select “How to Release a Payment.”

With all the changes underway, we do not recommend downloading the manual to your computer. Accessing the manual through the AWARE page will guarantee you the most up-to-date information. OOD’s VR policy and training unit is working with our technology-based training developer to create an e-learning module on how to use the AWARE manual.

If you experience any additional concerns in AWARE, you can always submit a ServiceNow Request. The link is stateofohio.service-now.com. The AWARE manual can also provide users with information needed to submit on the request. In upcoming articles, we will offer more tips to assist AWARE users.

Just a Bit More: Educating Yourself on Military Culture

Military to Civilian Transitional Coaching

By Cheryl Malone
Life Transition for Me CEO & Coach

Veterans face adjustments ranging from mental focus, to emotional and resource challenges when integrating back into the civilian community. Considering the major differences between the military culture and civilian life overall, this is not surprising. Some adjustments are based on the veteran’s individual experience.

Veterans you work with may need only a little help to make a smooth transition and others will demand more. In either case, as counselors helping veterans, you can play an important role. However, to start, it is important to establish a good client-counselor relationship. In doing so, I recommend you do just a bit more by educating yourself on the military culture. Here is why:

Though your Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) background has prepared you with the knowledge and skills needed to be compassionate, empathetic, understanding and an excellent listener, most VR counselors working with veterans lack military familiarity. Veterans want you to understand and respect them before they let their mental and emotional guard down to share personal issues. Their service time has taught them to keep it together, for the most part, at all times. Additionally, many still carry a deep inner stigma about seeking or receiving mental health and other disability treatment.

Veteran clients have experienced a culture centered on being ready to defend our nation and national interests. They have come out of an environment that is highly structured, hierarchical, with its own customs, and even its own language, i.e., vacation is called leave, and “Got your six” is what marines say when they’ve got your back. Most veterans set high standards of best conduct, heavily relying on teamwork to get a given job accomplished. Service members, now veterans, committed themselves to this culture. They upheld the standards of conduct, pride of service, dependability and remaining fit mentally, emotionally and physically in order to fulfill their role. Since these concepts applied to work and play alike, most veterans learned to be on emotional and mental guard all the time, i.e., a Sergeant or Captain was always on duty. Members did not complain or share
vulnerabilities easily. If one did, he or she did so only with a chosen few.

Many veterans continue to carry this mindset and accustomed principles through their transition into the civilian world. Scaling these mindsets to start an effective client-counselor relationship may be a bit difficult, but it is possible. It just requires doing a little bit of self-educating on the military culture, with its customs, organizations and lingo. This extra groundwork will pave the way to understand and respect your veteran client, and you can establish a relationship which will be effective in personal and employment counseling.

One of the best resources I find for counselors to use is the Center of Deployment Psychology’s Military Culture: Core Competencies for Healthcare Professionals module (deploymentpsych.org/military-culture-course-modules). This is a free, 8-hour online course which introduces you to the military culture, treatment tools and other resources.

Other opportunities to learn more about the military culture and how to best interact with veterans are offered by Purdue University’s Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) and Syracuse University’s Institute of Veterans and Military Families. This past September, the MFRI hosted their annual Battlemind to Home Mental Health Summit, which provides an opportunity for counselors and behavioral health professionals to further understand and interact with veterans. You can visit their website at www.mfri.purdue.edu/.

Note: For more information on the military culture or veterans’ mindset, visit Life Transition for Me at www.lifetransitionforme.com/about-us/.

**NFB-Newsline Updates: Now Offering Additional Job and Shopping Features**

NFB-NEWSLINE is available at no charge in nearly every state and serves more than 112,000 subscribers with visual or physical impairments preventing traditional reading. As of mid-2016, it offers 343 domestic newspapers, 20 breaking news sources, 16 international newspapers, 63 magazines, shopping ads, television listings, and hundreds of thousands of job listings through CareerBuilder.com and USAJOBS.gov. USAJOBS.gov is a free web-based job board enabling federal job seekers access to thousands of job opportunities across hundreds of federal agencies and organizations, providing public notice for federal employment opportunities.

Today’s NFB-NEWSLINE’s subscribers can set up easy-to-use profiles to include opportunities offered by USAJOBS.gov. Searches can be customized by radius from a zip code, category and salary range. They can even include a specific search phrase such as “entry level” or “benefits.” Subscribers can set up multiple profiles (for example, searching in several different geographical areas, or searching for more than one type of employment). They also have the capability to email job listings to an email inbox.

Additionally, readers can now shop more independently with NFB-NEWSLINE’s new and improved target ads. These ads are deeply detailed with product names, prices, colors, sizes and brief descriptions, including all information available in the print ads. These descriptions have important information such as product dimensions, materials and washing instructions on clothing, age range and hazards on children’s toys, or compatibility and warranty information on electronics. The
ads are easy to navigate, with as much or as little about each product as the reader chooses. To build a shopping list or read more details later, subscribers can simply email themselves the product description.

For more information or to register for NFB-NEWSLINE, visit nfbnewslioneonline.org or if you need help, call 1-866-504-7300.

Social Security Spotlight: Helping Young People with Disabilities Successfully Transition to Adulthood

By Susan Wilschke, Deputy Associate Commissioner for Research, Demonstration, and Employment Support, Social Security Administration

Transition to adulthood can be challenging, especially for the more than one million young people with disabilities who come from low-income families and receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Part of the Social Security commitment is creating a path for children with disabilities that can lead to rewarding lives as adults.

During the transition years — generally from ages 14 to 18 and beyond — young people with disabilities ideally gain the knowledge and skills they’ll need to achieve independence and self-sufficiency. They face significant challenges, as many of the resources and services available to them end when they leave the educational system or reach age 18 and are classified as adults. Turning 18 also triggers an important change in SSI benefits. Social Security must make a new determination on SSI eligibility using the adult disability standards. About one in three such beneficiaries lose their SSI benefits.

It is critical for SSI beneficiaries nearing age 18 to begin preparing early. Social Security has policies, resources and other supports in place to help, but many people don’t know about them. We recently implemented several new initiatives to help young people and their families get ready for this transition.

We developed a new brochure, What You Need to Know About Your Supplemental Security Income When You Turn 18, describing key resources and information for young people receiving SSI. It explains the benefit redetermination at age 18 and special SSI work incentives for people participating in special education, vocational rehabilitation or working while attending school. It also includes information on Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) accounts, health programs, and support from other places, such as American Job Centers. We are mailing the brochure this year and each year in the future to all SSI recipients ages 14 to 17. We also added a new section to the Red Book, Social Security’s guide to work incentives, consolidating information on programs and resources for young people to help with the transition from school to adulthood.

Social Security also helps young people with disabilities who are about to leave foster care, often at age 18. When foster care ends, they may become eligible for SSI — but in the time period before SSI payments begin, they may be left without any means of support. We’ve expanded the early application period for people leaving foster care from 90 days before the date they leave foster care to 180 days. Starting an SSI application earlier allows for a smoother transition out of foster care for those eligible for SSI as adults.

We are also active members of the Federal Partners in Transition workgroup, which develops strategies to promote successful youth transitions. To learn more about what we are doing for transition-age youth, visit www.ssa.gov/redbook/eng/resources-youth.htm.

Tips on Disability Disclosure

Compiled from resources available on JAN: the Job Accommodation Network

Disclosing a disability is something that nearly all OOD consumers need to consider. This holds true whether they are starting a new job, transitioning from school or
 retaining a job after acquiring a disability. For people still struggling with accepting their medical condition, making the decision to disclose can be overwhelming, especially in the case of invisible disabilities that nonetheless play a role in the workplace. People new to disabilities may face challenges such as understanding their own impairments and determining what types of accommodations are available in the first place. The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) offers these tips and other insights:
• Do disclose when you need an accommodation
• Do know who to disclose to
• Do know how to disclose
• Don’t disclose too soon or too late
• Don’t disclose to everyone
• Most importantly, do your homework
For additional details, see disclosure EAPdoc askjan.org/media/eaps/disclosureEAPdoc.
JAN also cites common questions managers receive, like:

Question
“An employee is asking about a co-worker’s accommodation. As a manager, what do I say?”

While many laws and policies exist to protect worker privacy, a few statements safe to share include:

Answers
• “We have a policy of assisting any employee who encounters difficulties in the workplace.”
• “Many workplace issues encountered by employees are personal. In these circumstances, it is our policy to respect employee privacy.”
• “We look and treat employees individually and make considerations based upon good business reasons, which allow for the privacy of each individual.”

More details are available at askjan.org/blog/?p=479.

Instant Replay: Tips on Using OhioMeansJobs for Interview Skills
By Nate Fernandes, Digital Accessibility Coordinator, Office of the Secretary of State
So, your consumer has mastered the resume and application process and gets invited to an interview. Did you know OhioMeansJobs offers a fun and easy way to practice and fine tune interview skills through a powerful combination of video tutorials and virtual interview practice? Let’s start at jobseeker.ohiomeansjobs.monster.com/PracticingInterviews.aspx.

Before calling the next play, let’s take a time out and make sure the system meets minimum technical requirements. These include: Google Chrome v. 25, Mozilla Firefox v. 18, Apple Safari v. 7 and Microsoft Internet Explorer 10. Users need to run a minimum of Windows 7 or Mac OS X v10.9. Remember to check your internet speed at SpeedTest.net. If the consistent upload speed of at least 2Mbps is detected, you’re good to go.

With the technomumbo jumbo out of the way, let’s break the huddle and get to why we’re here. First comes a video curriculum covering aspects of interviewing such as job interview fundamentals, common mistakes, non-verbals, behavioral questions/telling a story during interviews, and the importance of asking smart questions. Modules with written lessons are also available.

Now comes the Practicing Interviews Arena. Click PRACTICE INTERVIEWS on the navigation bar. One may choose from four practice interview categories. (Note: It contains about 90 percent of the questions that are likely to come up in a job interview.) INDUSTRY chooses PRACTICE INTERVIEWS from dozens of industries and job roles.
These resources are not meant to replace the general interviews, but they do complement them by offering some industry-specific questions. COMPETENCY picks from a variety of skill-sets and strengths an interviewer may be looking for in the right candidate. Finally, under ADMISSIONS INTERVIEWS there are practice interviews by program type and school, including undergrad, grad, business, law or med school.

One can now also name an interview by clicking the EDIT NAME button. For ease, most people name interviews based on the company they are interviewing with (e.g. ABC Company Interview). This is especially helpful if interviewing with multiple companies or schools looking for specific attributes.

Now, begin the Mock Interview by clicking the PLAY button under the interviewer to hear an interview question, and when finished, simply click Next Question. The recording buttons should be fairly self-explanatory. A three-second countdown is provided to give a moment to prepare to answer the given question after the record button is hit. Afterwards, the answer is available to play back for review, with the option of saving by clicking Save, or discarding by clicking Re-record. If one saved an answer but then decides against keeping it, just click Delete to remove. A cool feature available to you is the ability to share the answer with others, like a job developer, to gain more feedback on an answer simply by emailing a link to the recording.

In My Videos, sharing can be done in one of two ways. The first is to simply click the EDIT button and select SHARE. Alternately, one may select several videos by first checking the CHECK BOX next to each video, and then clicking the blue SHARE SELECTED button toward the bottom of the page.

A final feature I want to touch on is Interview Roulette. Like a scrimmage, it’s meant to keep interviewees on their toes by throwing out random questions. This is similar to a typical interview in the Mock Interview Module.

After rating answers on questions, one may choose to check out the Interview Question Library. Here, one is able to absorb some question-specific tips and also practice repeatedly (without having to go through a whole mock interview). Example answers are provided for each question. The My Videos section is a great place to keep track of all recordings for postgame film study. As with interviews, one may easily review, rate and share all saved videos.

In wrapping up, it is hoped this series of articles has given you, as VR professionals, a brief introduction to the many potential resources found on OhioMeansJobs. However, this falls flat if you do not share the information with your consumers, job developers and others who may assist in the job search process. If you take some time to become familiar with the website and its functions, who knows? It might be just the thing that gives you, as OSU Coach Urban Meyer calls it, “The Edge!”

Disability Trivia: We’ve Come a Long Way!

Benjamin William Arnett of Greene County (1838-1906) was the first black/Native American state legislator elected to represent a majority white constituency in Ohio. He lost one leg at age 20 after an injury and a resulting tumor. As a bishop and teacher, Arnett was particularly concerned that state law did not ensure that black children had the same educational opportunities as white children. In 1887, statutes that he initiated regarding education were changed. The state was thereafter required to provide equal opportunities to all children.

“'The conflict of right and wrong is not confined to the human heart, but found in the laws and customs of men,’” he said. For additional details, see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_W._Arnett and www.blackpast.org/aah/arnett-bishop-benjamin-william-1838-1906.
Scholarship Corner: Tips and Upcoming Due Dates

We are listing these (mostly) disability-related financial opportunities by due date on a quarterly basis. We urge you to show these opportunities to families and students potentially eligible.

Deadlines Various: This website leads to several dozen scholarships, including students with disabilities and children of those with disabilities around the USA. www.lookingglass.org/scholarships/51-additional-scholarship-resources

Deadline Rolling: The Academy of Special Dreams offers two types of scholarships. One for college students with disabilities pursuing art studies and the other for adult artists. www.specialacademy.org/scholarship/

Deadlines Various: Youth For Understanding USA (YFU) offers high school students the opportunity to study abroad on a summer semester or year-long homestay program. YFU has more than 100 programs to 40 plus countries. Interested students of any ability can speak with an admissions counselor at 1-800-TEENAGE. online.yfuusa.org/study-abroad/scholarships.php

Deadlines Various: These websites list numerous scholarships available primarily for students who are deaf or who have hearing loss. www.agbell.org/Document.aspx?id=286 and www.collegescholarships.org/scholarships/deaf.htm

Deadline December 15: A $1,500 Silver Cross Scholarship Program is available for full-time undergraduate students using a mobility device. www.silvercross.com/scholarship/

Deadline December 31: Able Flight provides pilot training to people with disabilities who are eligible to get a license. Based at Purdue University, from mid-May to early July, four types of disability scholarships are available. ableflight.org/scholarships

Deadline January 10: An internship program for youth in international development and foreign affairs is slated for late-May to July. The internship will bring a group of international-minded U.S. citizen graduate students, recent graduates and rising juniors and seniors with disabilities to Washington, D.C. for nine weeks. The U.S. International Council on Disabilities will cover the cost of accessible housing during the program, reimburse travel expenses and provide a limited stipend. For criteria and FAQs, go to usicd.org/template/page.cfm?id=257.

Deadline January 31: The RiSE Scholarship Foundation is for high school seniors in the learning disability community. risescholarshipfoundation.org/riise-award/apply-now/

Deadline January 31: Baer Reintegration Scholarships are available for students with mental illness, covering part or all education levels. www.reintegration.com/scholarship-program/

Deadline March 1: The ASCLA Leadership & Professional Achievement Award is for students with disabilities needing services or accommodations while studying library science. www.ala.org/ascla/asclacentury

Deadline March 1: A $1,000 Darrell Parks Scholarship from the Ohio Association for Career and Technical Education (Ohio ACTE) is available. Any student enrolled in an Ohio Career and Technical Program can apply. www.ohioacte.org/scholarship

Deadline March 31: The Ability Center of Greater Toledo Scholarships is being offered to applicants with a disability and who reside in Lucas, Wood, Fulton, Henry, Ottawa, Defiance or Williams Counties.

Deadline March 31: A variety of scholarships from Lighthouse Guild is offered to students at all levels with visual impairments. Financial need is not a requirement. www.lighthouseguild.org/programs-services/scholarships/
At Your Fingertips: A Few Specialty Disability Products, Blogs and Websites

Note: OOD makes no endorsement of the evaluations or products below. However, these and other websites represent commonly used access for gifts and other specialty items across some disability communities.

• Harris Communications features products for deaf and hard of hearing customers that range from books/multi-media and equipment to novelties. www.harriscomm.com/

• From American Printing House for the Blind: The APH (non-profit) Instructional Products Catalog lists a wide variety of accessible aids, games, tools and supplies useful for home, work or school. www.aph.org/catalog/

• Find a wealth of blogs geared to fashion design suiting both women and men who use wheelchairs. www.google.com/search?q=wheelchair+fashion+blog&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwidnMHxovvOAhVCHR4KHT7qDGkQ1QIIZCgB&biw=1194&bih=734

• This blog introduces new ideas on designer wheelchairs, walkers, bags and other mobility-related devices. hdsmedallion.com/blogs/designer-mobility-bags/tagged/fashion

• This blog details the 50 Best Websites for Audio Book Addicts. book-reviewsblog-bookworm.blogspot.com/2009/08/50-best-websites-for-audio-book-addicts.html

• This page lists in alphabetical order websites and descriptions of vendors specializing in blindness technology. www.nyise.org/

• This page presents an easy-to-read comparison and guide to Buying Low Vision Magnifiers. www.allaboutvision.com/buysmart/magnifiers.htm

Thanks and So Long
Thank you to each person who wrote or was interviewed for these articles. If you have article suggestions, a success story or best practice from your work, email Elizabeth L. Sammons, HireGround coordinator at elizabeth.sammons@ood.ohio.gov.

Interviewees, Artists, Authors and Editors
Lindsay Blusiewicz
Nate Fernandes
Rebecca Halstead
Randy Jones
Diane Koren
Brigid Krane, logo design
Cheryl Malone
Pam Prosser
Susan Wilschke
NFB-Newsline Team