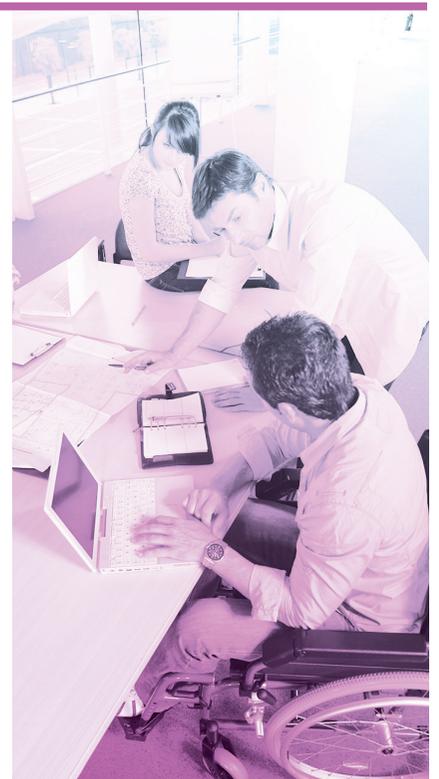


pennsylvania

Employment First

STATE FISCAL YEAR 2017-18 **QUARTER TWO** UPDATES



Quarter Two = October, November, December 2017



★ SUCCESS STORY ★

Karra Fisher has worked at a local restaurant for more than seven years. “I got the job with help from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and Living Unlimited, Inc.” She is a participant in the Adult Autism Waiver.

“I work the cold bar and the bakery,” she says. “(We’re) one big, happy family ... drive each other crazy, but it’s fun.” Fisher, 25, is often called to cover other shifts, and is happy to help. Her dedication has resulted in her new independence: She recently moved into her own apartment and is saving for a car.



“Right now, I have to get a ride from a co-worker or ride my bike in nice weather,” she says. She dreams of having a motorcycle license someday, and “drive a Spyder bike or maybe even a Tron Legacy.”

Fisher says others should not make assumptions about individuals with autism. “Don’t judge a book by the cover. There’s more that we can do than what people think. You’ll be surprised to find a hidden gem in front of your eyes.”

Fisher has other goals, as well. She hopes to open an Etsy account to sell her handmade crafts, such as bath bombs and garden decorations, and one day she hopes to attend culinary school.

Because Fisher is willing to accept help from providers, independence is achievable. She encourages others. “Let other people give you a helping hand,” she says. “No matter how bleak the circumstances, take the opportunity, because it can lead to a better life.”

While Fisher has been working at the local restaurant for seven years, the part of this story that makes it a “Quarter 2 Success Story” is that from her income, she’s been able to move into her own apartment and save for a car. Karra’s story is an example of how the money earned through employment can help a person become more self-sufficient. Her pride shines through her eyes in the photo and through her words in this story. Karra is part of one big happy family at her job.



I. PRIORITY



REVIEW, IDENTIFY, AND CHANGE POLICY TO ALIGN WITH EXECUTIVE ORDER 2016-03 OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION.



Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) continues to ensure that language in newly implemented policies aligns with Executive Order 2016-03. OVR has also expanded services to adjudicated students in the Department of Human Services (DHS) Bureau of Juvenile Justice Systems' (BJJS) contracted facilitates for delinquent students. This includes offering paid work experiences and soft skills polishing.

Department of Human Services

The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) has worked with OVR to convene an interagency work group to update the Joint Referral Bulletin, a bulletin to update guidance regarding requirements for when individuals must be referred to OVR, to reflect the changes in ODP's waiver employment service definitions that occurred on July 1, 2017. OVR and ODP plan to conduct collaborative trainings on the Joint Referral Bulletin for supports coordinators and vocational rehabilitation counselors after it is released.

Department of Education

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) continues its work to conduct a review of all existing regulations and policies to identify provisions which are, or may be, in conflict with Executive Order 2016-03 and pursue the adoption of changes to ensure that regulations and polices align.

II. PRIORITY



RAISE THE EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYMENT GOALS FOR CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY AT AN EARLY AGE. WORK WITH PARENTS AND PUBLICLY-FUNDED PROGRAMS TO SHIFT EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS THIS GOAL.



Department of Human Services

ODP is brainstorming creative ways in which the Supporting Families Initiative and Employment First Initiative can partner to help families envision a good life for their loved ones. For example, the Life Course trainings, conducted by Supporting Families



at various employment coalitions throughout the state, are geared toward teaching the employment coalition attendees how they and the families with whom they work can tap into a combination of supports to help individuals achieve their life goals, including employment.

ODP is also engaging with colleagues at the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), specifically the Bureau of Early

Intervention Services, to talk about opportunities to partner in reaching families to envision a good life for their young children. OCDEL has implemented policies on inclusion and reduction of suspension and expulsion of children from early learning environments. OCDEL also continues to support local early learning programs to reduce suspension and expulsion from their programs.

Pennsylvania Department of Education

Fifty participants attended PDE's 2018 Making a Difference Conference featuring, "Families Matter: Engaging Families in the Transition Process," which focused on how OVR and PDE can work together to engage families in secondary transition — the process of preparing students for life after they leave high school. The conference also provided methods and resources to involve families in monitoring their child's attendance, behavior, and grades. Finally, the session discussed methods of collaboration with families to identify possible work experiences for their child.

III. PRIORITY



**PREPARE YOUNG PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY TO
BECOME WORKING ADULTS WITH A DISABILITY.**



Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

OVR is expanding its Early Reach Program and helping fund transition counselors to implement a pilot project with select school districts. This pilot project seeks to identify a statistically significant number of students with varying degrees of disabilities. The project will also examine Individualized Education Program (IEP) expenditures for those students that can be used to develop and distribute



recommendations for school districts outlining how to most effectively educate students with a disability to achieve competitive integrated employment outcomes. In addition, OVR is promoting the use of wage reimbursement on-the-job training through internships or summer work initiatives which started in Allegheny County and now is expanding to other regions.



Pennsylvania Department of Education

The School to Community-Based Competitive Employment Grants for 2017-18 awarded six grants to school districts, an intermediate unit, and educational programs benefiting a total of 70 students. Each awardee is expected to work jointly with OVR for completion of a successful grant outcome.

“Utilizing Youth and Family Research Data to Improve Secondary Transition Practices in Pennsylvania” is a large training session to provide information on how to improve secondary transition practices within the commonwealth and positively impact the post-school outcomes of transitioning youth with disabilities. “Preparing Transition Age Youth with Autism for Employment Train the Trainer” was held in the eastern region of

the state and had more than 72 attendees. PDE also continues training personnel on the impacts of the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) 2014 Home and Community-Based Services Rule.

In January 2018, the Bureau of Special Education (BSE) published a new resource, “Are You On-Track to Graduate? Check Your ABCs,” which is available electronically on the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) website. This publication was designed for and by students, including students with disabilities. The purpose of this resource is for students to determine if they are on-track for graduation by addressing checkpoints with regards to attendance, behavior, and course performance. This publication will be distributed throughout the three PaTTAN facilities and during state and national conferences, provided to state systemic improvement plan learning sites, and is available electronically for the public to download or order, as needed. In addition, an Autism College and High School Integration for Educational and Vocational Excellence (ACHIEVE) project continues to provide support related to Autism and college/high school integration

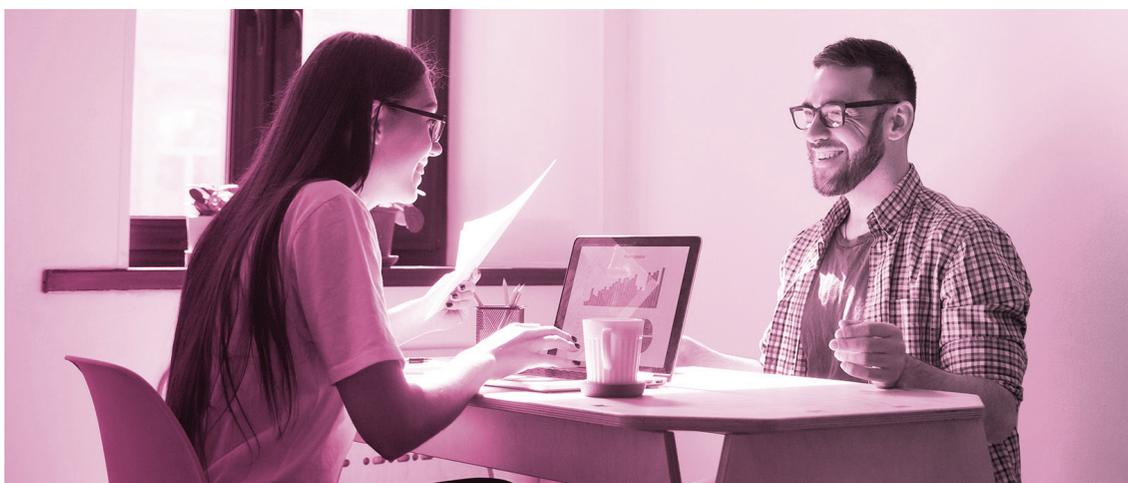


for educational and vocational excellence. This is a one-of-a-kind project that involves cross-agency work between higher education, OVR and BSE technical assistance benefiting students in college and their work outcomes.

IV. PRIORITY



TRANSITION STUDENTS FROM SECONDARY EDUCATION TO ADULT LIFE.



Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

OVR Business Services is working closely with the Department of Labor & Industry's (L&I) Registered Apprenticeship Office to explore utilizing Career and Technology Centers (CTC) as pre-apprenticeship or registered apprenticeship sponsors. A statewide interagency training initiative, "Experience the Employment Connection (EEC): Possibilities in Action," designed to increase effective person-centered service delivery for individuals with disabilities in relation to employment ended in November 2017. This was a joint initiative among OVR, BSE, ODP, and the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse (OMHSAS). Fifteen sessions occurred between September and November 2017, with a total of 1,047 attendees participating throughout the state. The focus was on Employment First and included a variety of interactive activities that encouraged discussion and collaboration among participants. The afternoon session included a separate session for executive and management staff from partner agencies to brainstorm ideas toward increased collaboration. For OVR staff who were unable to attend a local EEC session, OVR provided a brief recap on the EEC training outcomes featured on a video conference session with a focus on access to the training materials for local replication.



Department of Human Services

ODP has been working towards the expansion of the Person/Family Directed Support Waiver to 820 high school graduates, as referenced in the Quarter 4 SFY 16-17 Report. A total of 490 students are enrolled, 130 students are in the process of being enrolled, and 200 slots have been released for 2018 graduates.



Pennsylvania Department of Education

The Bearcat B.E.S.T. Program, a college-based transition program for individuals ages 18-21 with intellectual and developmental disabilities, is part of a state effort to provide transition programming for young adults who may not have the aptitude for post-secondary education, but could develop a greater level of independence with appropriate transition programming. The goals of the program are to develop the students' capabilities in each of the four pillar areas: academics, vocational training, activities of daily living, and social skills. The BSE director visited one such transition/integrated employment project — a joint venture between BSE, local education agencies (LEAs) in the Intermediate Unit (IU) #7 catchment area, and St. Vincent College. PDE sees this program as a promising practice for positive employment outcomes for recent high school graduates based on outcomes. BSE intends to fund the project for an additional two years, with each partner taking greater ownership in the fiscal realm, so as to ensure sustainable practices. In addition to the fiscal balance, longitudinal data will be collected to determine if students who matriculate through the project, which includes integrated and paid work experiences, are able to sustain employment three years out from graduation.

V. PRIORITY



ASSIST ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES IN OBTAINING AND MAINTAINING EMPLOYMENT.



Department of Human Services

The Consolidated, P/FDS, and Community Living waivers — effective January 1, 2018 and serving 1,000 people — are now open to individuals who have autism only.



This is a capped waiver at \$70,000 and includes the same employment services that are offered through the Consolidated and P/FDS waivers. There are 818 individuals who have been enrolled in the Community Living Waiver thus far. As of July 1, 2017, individuals who have Autism do not need a co-occurring intellectual disability in order to qualify for the Consolidated and P/FDS waivers.

The six providers who attended the OVR/ODP regional provider “transformation boot camps” in May 2017 have been selected to receive one-on-one technical assistance from the subject matter experts who conducted the trainings. These providers are currently in the process of receiving the technical assistance. ODP reported that each state center has at least two staff members who are nationally certified in discovery, a training to teach individuals how to plan, develop and implement customized employment opportunities for individuals with

disabilities. So far, 10 individuals throughout the five state centers have complete discovery portfolios which are profiles that outline an individual’s strengths, interests and conditions for success. The centers have also been engaging OVR to help individuals obtain competitive-integrated employment. In addition to the training and waiver updates, the contract that ODP and the Office of Long Term Living (OLTL) are negotiating with Virginia Commonwealth University related to benefits counseling training is in the procurement process.

ODP continues to emphasize with supports coordinators the instrumental role supports coordinators play in helping individuals and families raise their expectations related to employment, and that they have the power to change the trajectory of an individual’s life experience.



Pennsylvania has been selected as a “core state” to receive technical assistance through the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP) during the 2018 federal fiscal year. This technical assistance is available for multiple agencies and offices in Pennsylvania, including L&I, PDE, and DHS. The two “buckets” that PA selected as areas for which we will receive technical assistance are employer engagement and capacity building.

OLTL has made home and community-based service program participants aware of free benefits counseling available through the Social Security Administration’s Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Program (WIPA) and has developed benefits counseling services within its waivers to cover the cost of benefits counseling when free WIPA assistance is not readily available. In addition, OLTL continues ongoing work with Community HealthChoices (CHC) and the managed care organizations (MCOs).

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

OVR’s regional Section 511 specialists presented, “Implementation of WIPA Section 511: OVR’s Career Information & Referral Sessions,” at the 2017 Rehabilitation & Community Providers Association (RCPA) conference. Regional 511 specialists conducted video conference training for OVR staff to review updated procedures that should be implemented by field staff when working on a Section 511 case, specifically in regards to youth with disabilities who are interested in sub-minimum wage employment including updated forms and documentation that is required for these cases. This will include the process to alert 511 specialists about when career and information sessions are required, as well as updates to the youth flow chart.

Department of General Services

There were no referrals to Bureau of Diversity, Inclusion, and Small Business Opportunities (BDISBO) this quarter from OVR, ODP, or OLTL.





VI. PRIORITY



TRANSPORTATION FOR INDIVIDUALS TO SUCCEED ON THE JOB, THEY NEED RELIABLE TRANSPORTATION TO GET TO AND FROM WORK, ON TIME, EVERY TIME.

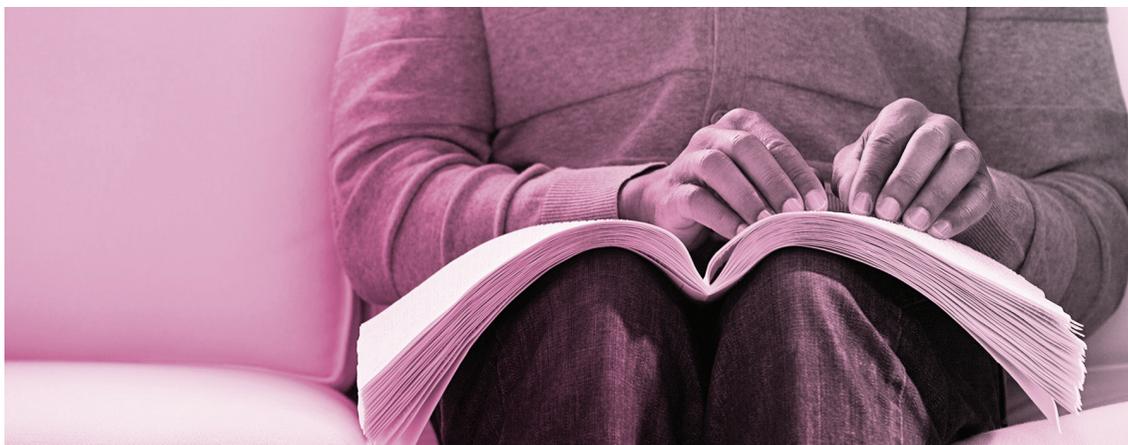


Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

OVR has explored training and business collaborative with Enterprise Ride Share and Commuter Services of Pennsylvania to increase opportunities for reasonable commuter fees to and from employment.

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) completed twenty-five facility projects with a number of ADA benefits. The projects included sidewalk repairs and replacements, restroom improvements, fire alarm system upgrades, exit signs and emergency lighting, and door and security gate replacements. The projects were completed at various district offices, driver's license centers, roadside rest stops and county offices.



VII. PRIORITY



LEAD BY EXAMPLE: IMPROVE STATE CONTRACTS.



Department of General Services

BDISBO indicates that the number of certified disabled-owned businesses in their program has fallen from seven to six. Two disabled-owned businesses recently expired. DGS has contacted them to remind them to renew.

**VIII. PRIORITY****LEAD BY EXAMPLE: REDUCE BARRIERS
TO COMMONWEALTH EMPLOYMENT.****Office of Administration**

The Office of Administration is in the planning stages of a voluntary survey that will be sent to commonwealth employees to establish a baseline for the percentage of the workforce that has a disability. This information will be useful in developing hiring initiatives that will assist in meeting, maintaining, and exceeding Governor Wolf's hiring goal of 7 percent. The survey is expected to be sent out in Quarter 1 of 2019.

**IX. PRIORITY****EXPAND PRIVATE-PUBLIC RELATIONSHIPS.****The Department of Human Services**

OLTL continues the collaboration between DHS and OVR to provide financial support to develop and sustain additional employment coalitions across Pennsylvania.

**X. PRIORITY****INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS****Office of Vocational Rehabilitation**

The OVR business services publishes electronic and printable fact sheets, targeted to private and public sector employers, on access to OVR talent, success stories, numbers, and descriptions of disability-related consultation services and success stories. Started in 2016, these quarterly messages are posted on the OVR publications page. Business services staff in the central office and throughout the combined bureau district offices maintain membership in regional Chambers of Commerce and the Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRMS) to increase networking and business engagement.

**XI. PRIORITY****COLLECT AND COORDINATE DATA****Office of Vocational Rehabilitation**

Act 26 charges OVR, in collaboration with PDE, to collect and report data related to



special education students with transition plans and with facilitating the process of job and career development between local education agencies (LEAs) and public and private employers, focusing on job skills training; job coaching; competitive integrated work based learning experiences; and

counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary education programs at institutions of higher education. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between PDE and L&I was issued and approved to allow these partner agencies to collect and share student level data so that L&I may fulfill its statutory duties. OVR made available on its website a report on the progress of the implementation of this act and issued a copy of the report to the L&I Secretary, the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council, the State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Secretary of Education.

Department of Human Services

ODP is working to collect and publish data on all individuals enrolled in any Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) related to employment services utilizing PeopleStat data, supports coordination organization (SCO) baseline employment data surveys, and individual monitoring tool employment questions. A data sharing agreement between the OVR and ODP was approved in December 2017. Because each office provides employment services, identifying individuals served by both entities and the services they receive will assist in service coordination, utilization of comparable benefits, and prevention of duplication of services.

OLTL continues to collect and publish data on all program participants enrolled in any program that provides HCBS and have employment as a goal in their service plan; are receiving employment services; are employed; and determine other important data that should be published, such as hours worked, type of job, full or part-time, etc.

Pennsylvania Department of Education

PDE continues to collaborate with OVR to ensure release of the data report that illustrates how many students with a disability are connected to competitive-integrated jobs before they leave secondary education settings.

