



Rehabilitation Services Commission

Office of Communications & Legislation

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Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission

Chairman Readler and committee members of the public institutions committee, my name is Stephen Wilson and I am the Legislative Liaison at the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission (RSC). I am pleased to discuss how RSC assists individuals that are considered insane, blind, deaf and dumb (more specifically blind and deaf).

What is RSC?

RSC was established in 1970 and is the state agency responsible for assisting individuals with disabilities to live independently, gain meaningful employment or receive disability benefits through the Social Security Administration. This is accomplished through three major divisions, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired and Division of Disability Determination (DDD).

More than 1.5 million (13.3%) Ohioans have a disability. In 2012, approximately 22,000 Ohioans with disabilities were in a plan to achieve their employment goals through RSC's Vocational Rehabilitation Program, a competitive jobs training and workforce development program that assists people with disabilities obtain and retain employment. The average wage for individuals who secured employment through RSC's Vocational Rehabilitation program was \$11 per hour with 30 average hours worked per week.

RSC's Division of Disability Determination decides the medical eligibility for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits and Supplemental Social Security Income (SSI) for Ohioans with disabilities that are unable to work. One hundred percent of DDD's funding is provided by the Social Security Administration, which sets the workload and staffing levels. In FY 2012, DDD determined eligibility of 214,000 claims.

Some of RSC's additional programs that assist individuals who are deaf, blind and disabled are The Business Enterprise Program, Community Centers for the Deaf, Independent Living, and Personal Care Assistance Program.

Business Enterprise Program

The RSC Business Enterprise Program is a career opportunity for individuals who are blind. The Business Enterprise Program, which provides people who are legally blind with employment opportunities as managers and operators of food service facilities, often in government buildings and at roadside rest stops.

Funds for this program are used to establish a liability insurance program for food stand operators; to maintain, repair, and remodel vending stands; and to purchase new equipment. In FY 2011, 105 blind licensees managed 115 facilities across the state. Gross sales for these businesses totaled \$17.4 million in FY 2011. In that year, the businesses employed 130 individuals and paid about \$2.8 million in wages.

Community Centers for the Deaf

The Community Centers for the Deaf (CCD) are a resource for Ohioans who are deaf or hard of hearing to provide interpreting, community advocacy and education, leadership, and support.

There are 9 CCDs in Ohio and each Center receives funding from RSC to provide community support and language services for Ohioans who are deaf, their families, and their communities.

Independent Living

The Independent Living Program is to aid Ohioans with severe physical disabilities in their quest for independence; RSC's offers services to help people live independently.

RSC supports the federally mandated Independent Living Program. The Independent Living (IL) Program is independent from RSC, which serves as a fiscal agent. Authority for the program resides in Title VII of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The IL Program receives a federal match of \$9 for every \$1 of state funds spent on the program.

The IL Program includes the Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council and local centers for independent living (CILs). The Council includes 11 voting members appointed by the Governor who represent the disabilities community, as well as ex officio and liaison members who represent various government entities. The Council develops, monitors, and evaluates the state plan for independent living. The Council also provides financial assistance to the CILs, as well as assistance in developing a statewide network of CILs. It also maintains a web site for those seeking information regarding independent living services via the Internet.

Ohio has 11 locally managed CILs with three branch offices that provide services to assist people with severe disabilities to live independently and avoid institutionalization. Services provided include information and referral, advocacy, peer counseling, and independent living skills training.

Personal Care Assistance (PCA)

The PCA program aids Ohioans with severe physical disabilities in their quest for independence, RSC's Personal Care Assistance (PCA) Program provides financial resources for the activities of daily living. These personal care services may include but are not limited to dressing, grooming, bathing and toileting, food preparation, feeding, medicating, turning, repositioning, transferring and assisting with ambulation.

Through the PCA program, many Ohioans have been able to find and maintain employment and have left institutions for the personal independence of their own homes or apartments. Currently there are approximately 230 participants in this program: 48% of these individuals are working, 8% are self-employed, 17% are looking for work, 18% are in training, and 9% are in a maintenance-of living status.

Constitution's Language

Institutions for the benefit of the insane, blind, and deaf and dumb, shall always be fostered and supported by the state; and be subject to such regulations as may be prescribed by the General Assembly.

The terms such as insane and dumb are offensive and does not properly reflect the values of Ohio citizens with disabilities. RSC is currently pursuing updated language in the ORC as well. In the proposed and current version of HB 59, the ORC will be revised to replace "handicapped person" with "person with a disability." The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities changed its name from Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities in 2009 for this reason as well. This language in the constitution is outdated needs to be updated to use people first language.

Thank you very much for your time. I am pleased to answer any questions that you may have.