

Pipeline . . . direct from the state . . .

Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities
Ted Strickland, Governor John L. Martin, Director

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News Update: Status of Senate Bill 79

SB 79 - MRDD Name Change

Sponsor: Senator Jimmy Stewart,

Senate State and Local Government Committee

The House of representatives has passed SB 79 with a vote of 98 - 0.

It now returns to the Senate for final action.

SB 79 would change the name of the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (MRDD) and the County Boards of MRDD, to the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, and the “__” County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

1. Director Martin Addresses Current Budget Environment



We are sharpening our pencils to make the most of scarce financial resources.

Ohio's current budget environment is the most difficult in recent memory. It also has been characterized as the most challenging in decades, due to anticipated state revenue reductions reflecting 2005 tax reforms and unanticipated results from a sharp and long-term national economic downturn. In a recent statement, Governor Ted Strickland noted, "Because of the worsening economy, more tough budget choices are ahead." As Director of the ODMRDD I

would like to share with you a few things that our organization is doing to meet some of these challenges, as we await further definition of the 2009-2010 biennial budget.

In light of the state's financial difficulties, ODMRDD employees represented by the state's largest labor union, OCSEA, have agreed to observe ten unpaid cost savings days per year for the next two fiscal years, beginning July 1, 2009. It is anticipated that unpaid cost savings days will be extended to exempt Department employees, as well, through language in Sub. H. B. 1, the state's budget bill, and to employees represented by other unions that are currently in negotiations. The ten unpaid days represent, for each affected employee, a decrease of about 3.85% in earnings, in each of the next two years.

In addition to cost savings days, general overall wage increases and 'step' advancements are frozen during the same two-year period. A decrease in earnings -- along with the loss of workdays on the job -- is an unsettling outcome for everyone affected, and I know that it is being repeated many times over at Ohio's 88 County Boards and at many other public agencies and private businesses throughout the state. For example, Ohio's home and community based waiver service providers have had their reimbursement rates frozen since 2005.

While we remain positive about the resilience of the ODMRDD and of the MRDD community in general, we know that these difficult times affect us all. For example, if you call our Central Office and need to speak to someone about a particular issue, there will be fewer people available to help you on a given workday. I am confident that our staff will continue to do their best in meeting your needs; however, the level of staffing may not represent the same level of experience or expertise every day that we otherwise would hope to provide.

In addition, we continue to review and evaluate our available resources in order to assure the most appropriate, effective, and functional usage – including everything from tangible resources such as computers, to intangible resources such as the collective energy of our staff.

These steps will help preserve as many resources as possible for individuals and families, and the communities that serve them.

Currently, the House and the Senate are making final preparations for the Conference Committee, which will work to present a final version of the next biennium's budget for the Governor's consideration. While the specifics of the outcome are uncertain at the time, we know the final budget will impact our system. We will all work together to do the best we can with what we have.

We also greatly appreciate the continued support from and collaboration with our many partners in service to Ohioans with developmental disabilities, all of whom are similarly challenged by the current economic environment. Thank you. – *Respectfully, John Martin*



2. Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council Teleconference Pilot Program, Proposed Rule

ODMRDD recently filed a new administrative rule to establish the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council Teleconference Pilot Program. The rule is proposed (is not yet ‘in effect’) in accordance with House Bill 129 of Ohio’s 127th General Assembly, which authorizes a two-year pilot program for members of the Developmental Disabilities Council (‘DD Council’), as well as several other councils and boards, to be present at meetings by way of teleconferencing. The rule establishes requirements for conducting meetings via teleconference, and a policy regarding distribution and circulation of meeting-related documents.

The purpose of the pilot program is to determine if teleconferencing increases member participation, and whether or not teleconferencing is practical and cost-effective. Council members who need a reasonable accommodation due to a disability, or who reside more than 45 miles from the designated meeting location (i.e., Columbus), would be eligible to participate via teleconference.

It is anticipated that the cost of establishing teleconferencing capability for a meeting will be less than the cost of reimbursing members for mileage, meals, and lodging, and will result in an overall savings. The DD Council will be required to submit a report to the General Assembly by October 2010 that describes the costs and savings associated with teleconferencing.

Carolyn Knight, Acting Executive Director of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council, anticipates that the proposed rule will be very helpful. She states,

“ I am delighted to see that the General Assembly is recognizing the need for this kind of opportunity for people with disabilities. To be able to participate in meetings via teleconference is an option that can help empower individuals and improve overall membership participation. ”

A copy of the proposed rule (5123:1-8-01) is available at the ODMRDD *Rules Under Development* website (<http://mrdd.ohio.gov/rules/development.htm>). A copy of House Bill 129 is available at (<http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/search.cfm>).



3. Cost Projection Tool Will Simplify Medicaid Reporting

The Division of Medicaid Development and Administration provides this update on a major project, welcomes feedback on the subject anytime. Please direct comments or questions to Tracy Cloud-Thomas at Tracy.Cloud-Thomas@dmr.state.oh.us

ODMRDD currently is developing a Cost Projection Tool (CPT) to project costs for all Medicaid waiver services. It will be a single, common system to be used by all County Boards of MRDD and other providers, and will replace other cost projection tools currently in use, such as the 20/20.

Integration with other MRDD Applications

As part of the Department's efforts to increase efficiency in service delivery, the CPT is being built to integrate information across systems to improve accuracy and reduce the need to keep information updated in multiple places. The CPT will use data stored in other systems to project costs.

For example, according to Tracy Cloud-Thomas, Assistant Deputy Director with ODMRDD's Division of Medicaid Development and Administration, the CPT will obtain some individual demographic information from the upcoming (later in 2009) Individual Data System (IDS) and use the waiver span dates that are stored in the Waiver Management System (WMS).

In addition, the CPT will obtain the correct 'AAI group' from the Acuity Assessment Instrument (AAI) and the 'ODDP range' from the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Profile (ODDP), already in place. Lastly, it will integrate with the Provider Certification System to obtain a current listing of active providers. *(Sorry about all the acronyms, but it was almost impossible not to use them in this case!)*

One of the most significant changes coming with the Cost Projection Tool is the transfer of cost projection data to Daily Rate Application (DRA). Once in place, it no longer will be necessary for County Boards to enter information into the DRA, since the required information will already be available in the CPT. Providers will continue to enter their 'actuals' into the DRA as they do today.

Development Timeline

Throughout the development of the CPT, the Department is offering monthly project reviews to show the current status of parts of the system and get feedback on how the system is developing. ODMRDD expects to start user-testing this summer, with a full-fledged pilot beginning in the fall. We are planning a graduated roll-out of the CPT to county boards beginning in early 2010.

Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholder feedback throughout the CPT development process is critical to its success. At the monthly project reviews the development team hears input from providers, county board staff, ODMRDD staff and others, which has impacted how the CPT is being designed. We encourage stakeholders to attend our monthly project meetings, which review the functionality developed during the preceding month. In addition to the monthly reviews, the Department has worked to get stakeholder input on specific issues.

Tracy Cloud-Thomas reports that ODMRDD staff are grateful for the support they have received to-date from system partners. She states,

"We were very pleased with the attendance and participation at the County Board CPT review held on May 18th. Thank you to all who traveled to Columbus to review the development and provide feedback."



4. Hamilton County MRDD Named Outstanding Employer by National Guard and Reserves

The Hamilton County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (HCBMRDD) was recognized this month at a ceremony in Columbus for exemplary support of employees on military duty with the National Guard and Reserves. Adam Hardin, a Behavior Support Specialist before deployment, nominated the agency. He spent 14 months in Kuwait in 2006 and 2007 with his Navy Reserve Unit while employed by HCBMRDD.

The Ohio Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve annually recognizes civilian employers, statewide, for exemplary cooperation and understanding pertaining to employees called to military duty in the National Guard and Reserves. HCBMRDD received the 'Above and Beyond' award for employers who go beyond legal requirements.

Adam stated,

"I was overwhelmed by the support that came from so many departments and co-workers when I was deployed."

He added that he received regular emails, letters, and packages while in Kuwait, from students and staff at two schools operated by the agency -- Margaret B. Rost School and Bobbie B. Fairfax School, as well as from the agency's Robert Franks Adult Services Center.

The Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve was established in 1972 to assist in resolution of conflicts between civilian employers and military personnel in the National Guard and Reserves. Each state has a committee, as well as District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and Europe. The Committee's 'Above and Beyond' award is a top honor, and, according to HCBMRDD Superintendent Cheryl Phipps, "We were totally surprised and delighted to have been both nominated and selected."



Left: Adam Hardin at HCBMRDD.

Right: HCBMRDD's Adult Services Director, Peggy Kurz, with military personnel who are part of the Ohio Committee for Employer Support of the National Guard and Reserves.



5. Ritchey Named President of NASDDDS Board of Directors

Kenneth W. Ritchey, Assistant Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Human Services' Division of Developmental Disabilities, and former Director of the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (ODMRDD), has been named President of the Board of Directors for the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS). He has served the Board in various capacities for more than five years.

Underscoring this achievement, ODMRDD Director John Martin commented,

"Ken's devoted service to the field and experience in multiple states provides him with a unique perspective for this new role. I am sure he will approach this opportunity with the same welcome enthusiasm and energy he has always demonstrated."



Ken Ritchey

Ken joined New Jersey's Department of Human Services in March 2007, following eight years at the helm of the ODMRDD. In making the announcement, NASDDDS noted, "Ken continues to work to expand the available options in services that meet the needs of consumers and families, while expanding our ability to utilize federal funding opportunities."

The ODMRDD invites Ohio's developmental disabilities system partners to join in congratulating Ken Ritchey on this newest achievement.

Acknowledgments to NASDDDS' State News Briefs (formerly Beyond the Beltway), a bi-weekly electronic bulletin series which covers state policy and program initiatives of special interest to member state agencies.



6. WASCO's Heart to Art Galleria Opens in Marietta

The Washington County Board of Developmental Disabilities' non-profit organization, WASCO Inc., announces a new venture -- the 'Heart to Art Galleria' -- has opened on Front Street in Marietta. The non-profit organization provides vocational opportunities and habilitation for

people who have developmental disabilities, and the new galleria showcases products made by adults with various developmental challenges from across the state -- as well as specialty glass jewelry crafted by local Washington County residents.

"We were very happy to find an open store-front right here in the heart of the shopping district," said Jan Powell, Director of Adult Services for WASCO.

Paintings, roasted coffee, decorative pillows, patio furniture – a seemingly endless variety of items -- come from County Board programs and other art-producing entities around Ohio, including those in Athens, Delaware, Licking, Scioto, Stark, and Tuscarawas counties. WASCO's Jan Powell explains,

"We want people to support the talents of people with disabilities throughout the state, and sometimes they don't have a storefront."



ODMRDD Director John Martin, attended the Grand Opening event last month, and stated,

"We really appreciate the efforts of all of you down here, and what you're doing to enhance the lives of people with disabilities."

In addition to this new endeavor, WASCO operates the Marietta Harbor and Courthouse Café, and will manage Armory Square, a new project at the former National Guard Armory on Front Street, currently in development. (*Look for more on this in a future issue of Pipeline.*)

Congratulations to all involved in the opening of WASCO's Heart to Art Galleria – whose art and artists are featured on ODMRDD's website homepage at www.mrdd.ohio.gov this month.

Acknowledgements to the 'Heart to Art' article in the Marietta Times, May 23, 2009, by Evan Bevins.



Editor's Note

The terms 'mental retardation' and 'developmental disability' are a part of current clinically-accepted terminology. Usage of this terminology in ODMRDD publications is in no way intended to restrict or label any individuals based on their particular disability. Changes to accepted terminology are influenced by many factors, including research, accepted clinical definitions, and usage/social acceptance. 'Mental retardation' is one of many developmental disabilities, and the usage of the term will be gradually and appropriately phased out in ODMRDD publications wherever feasible. Currently, in the interest of communicating clearly and respectfully, the usage of the term 'retardation' may be seen in ODMRDD publications, and is never intended as negative slang.

County Boards and others in the MRDD community may reproduce the above statement in their materials, if desired.

Coming Soon ... The Spring 2009 Issue of
Pipeline Quarterly

... with stories and photos from across the state, including,
Building Accessible Homes in Union County



'See you in Pipeline Quarterly!'



Toll-Free Hotline

ODMRDD Hotline for Reporting Abuse, Neglect, and other Possible Major Unusual Incidents (MUIs)

ODMRDD's toll-free hotline number to report abuse/neglect and other MUI's is **1-866-313-MRDD (6733)**. Please note that MUIs are to be reported to the local County Board of MRDD, however, it is understood that there may be times an individual, staff member, or family member may feel it is a conflict -- or that, potentially, a County Board may be involved in the allegation. In those instances it is important to remember that the hotline number exists, and is to be used for reporting concerns in these situations.

Pipeline feedback ... direct from you to the state ...

Questions? Comments? *Pipeline* is an electronic publication of the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (ODMRDD), distributed approximately twice monthly to update and inform readers of time-sensitive, relevant information affecting MRDD stakeholders. Please share your questions or comments with us about *Pipeline* at feedback@odmrdd.state.oh.us, or contact Sherry Steinman at sherry.steinman@dmr.state.oh.us, phone (614) 644-0262.

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