

Ohio Direct Referral Demonstration (ODRD) *Project Description*

Background

The Social Security Administration (SSA) and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities' (OOD) will conduct the Ohio Direct Referral Demonstration (ODRD) to test the effectiveness of providing direct referrals to vocational rehabilitation services for 18 and 19 year-olds who are, or may become, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries. The participants in the demonstration will be individuals ages 18 and 19 at the time of enrollment, who are either (1) applying for SSDI or SSI or (2) undergoing an age-18 redetermination of SSI eligibility. The ODRD is a joint effort by SSA, and OOD's Division of Disability Determination (DDD) and Ohio's Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR). Each agency will contribute its own staff time to the demonstration, and SSA will not incur additional costs.

SSA is committed to improving adult employment outcomes and financial independence for SSI recipients and SSI and SSDI applicants who are in the process of transitioning to adulthood. The ODRD incorporates lessons learned from SSA's Youth Transition Demonstration and the Promoting Readiness of Minors in SSI demonstration. ODRD tests the effects of a direct referral to vocational rehabilitation services for individuals aged 18 or 19 who are in the process of applying for or undergoing an evaluation to retain benefits.

SSA will benefit from this demonstration by learning about the effectiveness of providing direct referrals to vocational rehabilitation programs as a method of intervention for transition-aged adults who allege disabilities. This strategy may lead to decreased reliance on SSA's disability programs, thereby potentially producing long-term cost savings for the agency. SSA staff will use SSA and BVR program data to evaluate the demonstration project.

Because SSA does not have the authority to provide vocational rehabilitation agencies information with which they can contact SSDI or SSI beneficiaries, we will be using our demonstration authorities (Sections 234 and 1110) to waive this rule.

Demonstration Design

This demonstration will be conducted using a random assignment design. The DDD will recruit 750 participants over a 1-year period (expected to be calendar year 2020) by sending an invitation and receiving consent to participate. Under their normal course of business, DDD receives medical files for disability benefit applications and continuing disability reviews under SSI or SSDI for the state of Ohio. DDD will process these cases under their normal procedures. In addition, they will periodically query their internal data system to identify claimants who would be appropriate for the demonstration because of their age and residence.

In order to recruit participants, DDD will send a document titled "Invitation to join the Ohio Direct Referral Demonstration" to identified potential participants. The invitation and consent forms will explain the demonstration and give the potential participant information necessary for

informed consent. In addition, DDD will send the youth the SSA-3288 form to sign for consent for DDD to transfer contact information to BVR. This information will comprise the direct referral.

Once DDD receives consent, DDD will randomly assign participants to one of two groups. These are the usual services group (control group) and the program services group (test group). DDD will send a letter to the participants describing their group assignment, and will send to SSA information identifying the participants and their group assignment.

Members of the usual services group will not receive a direct referral to BVR but will instead receive general information about BVR's services in the notice they receive indicating they have been assigned to the usual services group. Usual services group participants may contact BVR or any service provider on their own, but BVR will not initiate contact after study recruitment.

After DDD sends BVR information about program services group participants, BVR will contact the program service group members directly to set up an appointment. BVR will follow-up until these participants complete the initial intake appointment. If the participant is eligible for services, BVR will provide vocational rehabilitation services until case closure. BVR will track each participant's progress.

Once BVR receives referrals for program services group participants, BVR then will contact participants and begin the process to determine eligibility for BVR services. If the participant is eligible for services, BVR will request medical records from DDD. BVR will provide services under their usual protocol, and will report to SSA information about participants' use of BVR services. SSA will provide Congress with the final report at the end of the project, which we expect be in calendar year 2022.

This project will require approval from the Office of Management and Budget under the Paperwork Reduction Act. We expect receive approval in FY 2020.

Objectives

As part of SSA's evaluation, SSA will attempt to answer the following questions:

- How many individuals from the program services group applied for OOD's BVR services after the direct referral?
- How many individuals have employment outcomes such as job placement and earnings?
- What is the average length of time from application for OOD's BVR services to OOD's BVR's eligibility decision?
- What general vocational rehabilitation outcomes did participants achieve?
- What was the number of closed cases resulting in employment, and what was the number of cases closed for other reasons?

Expected Cost and Timeline

SSA will not expend any additional funds for this demonstration beyond costs for regular staff time.

The recruitment will last for one year (calendar year 2020). Once recruitment and enrollment is complete, we expect the evaluation to take two years (calendar years 2021 and 2022) to conduct the necessary analyses and prepare and release reports.