

7-18-14

To: Employment First stakeholders

From: Statewide Employment First Coordinator Mike Maley

Re: Employment First: Seamless Transition Pilot

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

Starting in September 2013, the Employment First initiative, with assistance from a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), began an Employment First Seamless Transition Pilot. The Seamless Transition model is based on research from ODEP's [Guideposts for Success](#). The model services include an emphasis on school-based preparation, youth empowerment leading to employment and career goals, work-based experiences, family supports, and connecting activities.



Karen Burch (left), a VR counselor, and Heidi Dirkse-Graw give an overview of Vocational Rehabilitation services to the Seamless Transition Pilot groups.

(Photo: Lightflies)

The pilot consists of Employment First teams in four counties: Washington, Multnomah, Clackamas, and Umatilla. The goal is to establish a seamless transition model

for transition-aged (16-21 years) people with significant disabilities, with strong emphasis on intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), from school to integrated paid work. Seamless transition means that through a coordinated and collaborative process, a student with disabilities will transition from school services directly into a paid job in the community with necessary supported employment services, without a gap in those services.

Local pilot team partners include but are not limited to: school districts, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Community Developmental Disability Programs (CDDPs), Support Service Brokerages, employment providers, family members, and mental health service providers.

The primary goal of the pilot is to determine effective strategies that result in the integrated employment of transition-age students.

In addition, the pilot aims to identify innovative and creative ideas to support collaboration and seamless transition policies that could be implemented statewide. The pilot also helps to identify what is working or not working about state policies and procedures that need to be supported more or addressed to facilitate a seamless transition for youth.

Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) are engaged throughout every step of the pilot as a resource for information and guidance to the teams.

Every quarter, the pilot teams hold a Community of Practice meeting where team members share information and discuss potential issues, as well as successes. At a recent meeting in July, Heather Lindsey shared updates from the recent trainings held by the Oregon Department of Education. Heidi Dirkse-Graw, president of Dirkse Counseling & Consulting, and Karen Burch, VR counselor, walked the group through Vocational Rehabilitation services in a “Four Stages of VR” chart, and discussed possibilities for streamlining services for transition-age adults.

Finally, each county team took turns sharing employment success stories and what is working so far with the pilot, and what could use improvement. More than 10 students participated in the 2013-14 school year, and more than 20 students will participate in pilots in the 2014-15 school year.

One participant at the meeting commented that there had been a good success rate in placing students in summer work experience. “I feel like already that this has changed attitudes on who can work,” she said. “We are moving where we need to be, which is in the direction of earlier intervention.”

The pilot project will continue through the 2014-15 school year.

Thank you all for your continued involvement, support, and advocacy for services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Oregon. If you have comments or other questions, please email them to employment.first@state.or.us

~ Mike

- A photo slideshow from the meeting is available to view at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dhsoregon/sets/72157645312348917/>