

7-11-14

To: Employment First stakeholders

From: Statewide Employment First Coordinator Mike Maley

Re: Employment First: Employment Learning Collaborative

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

One of the questions we have received around the efforts to increase integrated employment opportunities in Oregon has been around provider capacity and training. This message is to inform you of one of the many initiatives around capacity and training happening right now.

Medford-based Living Opportunities, Inc. was awarded a grant by Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the Oregon Community Foundation to train five provider organizations for 18-months on supported employment. Called the Employment Learning Collaborative, the five providers chosen to participate in this grant are: Oregon Supported Living Program (Eugene), Partnerships in Community Living (Monmouth), Adult Learning Systems of Oregon (Troutdale), Southern Oregon Aspire (Grants Pass), and Riverside Training Center (St. Helens).

Living Opportunities developed 106 jobs in the Medford area between July 2010 and Dec. 2013. Of those, 92 were individual integrated jobs and 14 were group supported jobs. All but five were at minimum wage or better. Jobs were through both the comprehensive and support service (brokerage) systems.

Roger Hassenpflug, president and CEO of Living Opportunities, said the goal of the Employment Learning Collaborative is to train and support organizations in key aspects of individual supported employment. The training covers four main areas: Discovery, job development, job training (which includes natural supports and workplace accommodations) and ongoing support.

“This learning collaborative will focus on specific, boots-on-the-ground training for implementing a full range of supported employment strategies,” Hassenpflug said.

Employment Learning Collaborative held a kick-off event in June in Silverton to get all the provider organizations on board and familiar with the goals of the process. Chris Brandt, CEO of AtWork! in Washington, presented information about the full range of organizational change required when focusing on supported employment.

“One of the goals of this collaborative is we want the providers to develop relationships with one another and get to the point where they can work on problem solving together,” Hassenpflug said. “The kick-off event was a way to get them all in the same room to start that relationship building.”

Over the course of the next year, Living Opportunities will have a series of training events in Medford focused on three sets of activities: job development, Discovery, and job training/coaching.

“They will come to Medford and follow us on the process from start to finish, and then they are required to come up with their own strategy,” Hassenpflug said.

Then staff from Living Opportunities will go to each of the five provider sites and watch how they are implementing their supported employment strategy and give them feedback, including suggestions for improvements or changes.

Hassenpflug said the five providers in the Employment Learning Collaborative have shown a commitment to individual supported employment.

“This is about really closing the deal and being specific on how to do supported employment,” he said. “The only outcome that matters in this collaborative is the development of jobs in regular community businesses at the end of the day.”

For more information on Living Opportunities, go to <http://www.livingopps.org>

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