

5-15-15

To: Employment First stakeholders

From: Mike Maley, Statewide Employment First Coordinator

Re: Employment First: Update from Recent Local Leadership Meetings

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

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Leadership from the executive steering group of the Employment First initiative recently completed a series of meetings around the state with VR branch managers, special education directors, brokerage directors as well as Community Developmental Disabilities Program (CDDP) managers.

I attended these regional meetings, along with Lilia Teninty and Acacia McGuire Anderson with the Office of Developmental Disability Services (ODDS), Sarah Drinkwater and Mitch Kruska from the Oregon Department of Education, and Trina Lee, Robert Costello and Joe Miller from Vocational Rehabilitation. Additional state staff also attended.



Sarah Drinkwater (left) and Sally Simich with the Oregon Department of Education lead a brainstorming exercise at the Portland local leadership meeting.

Photo: Cassy McCartney

We traveled to Medford, Pendleton, Bend, Salem and Portland. Our goals were to (1) continue to enlist and reinforce local leadership in our efforts to implement the Employment First initiative, (2) obtain feedback on our efforts, and (3) encourage local collaboration and communication among partners.

We spent a majority of the time hearing from local leadership on what is working well, what barriers still exist, and discuss solutions to breaking down those

barriers. We held breakout sessions bringing VR, CDDP, brokerage and local education leaders together to share information.

The goal, as always, is to get everyone working together to increase individual integrated job opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

We had very good participation in both attendance and dialog. People traveled, some from very far, to share ideas. We heard constructive criticism, and we also heard about areas of success. Part of our goal was to hear what is working both locally and statewide, and areas we still need to improve.

One area where we consistently heard positive feedback was the work of the Transition Network Facilitators, who provide outreach, technical assistance, and training in their assigned regions. Local county developmental disability programs, brokerages and VR counselors said these regional positions have been helpful in bringing education into all discussions.

Statewide, people told us increased local collaboration is happening, and many folks are now meeting cross-agency regularly.

We also heard about areas that need improvement. Transportation and capacity continue to be at the forefront of everyone's mind, and these are issues that need to remain at the top of our agenda as we move forward.

Meeting face-to-face and continuing to listen to what is happening around the state is crucial to our success. We plan to continue having these types of forums and meetings with other key stakeholders in the future.

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