

To: Employment First stakeholders
From: Statewide Employment First Coordinator Mike Maley
Re: Employment First – Q&A with ODE Transition Liaison Heather Lindsey
(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

In a past message, we discussed the critical role that school districts and educators have in helping to prepare students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) for integrated employment. The Governor's Executive Order 13-04 includes specific expectations around a Memorandum of Understanding on Transition Students with Disabilities to the Workforce between the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS), and the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities (OCDD). This MOU is at: http://www.dhs.state.or.us/dd/supp_emp/docs/mou.pdf



Heather Lindsey (Photo: Lightflies Photography)

To assist with making connections between all those units and supporting the goals of the Executive Order and the Employment First initiative, ODE recently hired Heather Lindsey for the newly created position of Secondary Transition Liaison. Heather has a Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from St. Louis-based Maryville University. She lives in Salem with her husband and two children. Heather graciously agreed to sit down for a Q&A on her new role and primary goals.

1. Tell us a bit about yourself and your professional background?

Heather: I have worked in the field of transition services for over 10 years. Previous to this new position, I worked for Vocational Rehabilitation as a Counselor Specialist. During my tenure, I have had an opportunity to work with transition aged students in both urban and rural settings. I have a passion to ensure a seamless transition from school to employment.

2. What is your role as ODE's Transition Liaison?

Heather: My position as a Secondary Transition Liaison is to provide statewide management in the area of special education transition services as directed by the Executive Order. I plan to provide technical assistance to transition network facilitators to assist school districts, parent organizations, and participating

agencies to support a solid understanding of secondary special education and transition regulations, and implement evidence-based transition services.

3. What are your top goals in this new role?

Heather: I've picked four, although there is of course a lot of work ahead of us.

1. Coordinate technical assistance for school districts with DHS and VR, parents and related agencies regarding transition services for students with disabilities.
2. Work with ODDS, VR, and school districts to recognize and understand the expectations and requirements of the Executive Order.
3. Develop a Statewide Transition Technical Assistance Network. This network will work with local school districts and community partners in the provision of transition services throughout the state.
4. Help to create an overall culture change that employment should be a discussion in school at a younger age.

4. What are you focused on in the next three months?

Heather: We have started the process of recruiting and hiring eight part-time Transition Network Facilitators who will be placed throughout the entire state to work with specific regions. Together these positions will work as a larger network that will be a great resource in the community for educators, families and individuals. I am also working on gaining a better understanding of successful transition practices in communities throughout the state and in local employment first groups. I plan to share these successes with other transition programs, service agencies, and community support providers. Finally, we are developing regional training for transition teachers that will focus on transition-related curriculum, adult agency services and coordination, as well as community resources available to transition-age students.

5. Anything else you'd like to add?

Heather: I am excited about this partnership between education (ODE), VR, ODDS and the Council (OCDD) and getting out there to make those connections and being a resource for technical assistance. My career has been focused on trying to ensure a seamless successful transition for youth. I feel there is no more powerful question than, "What do you want to do when you grow up?" but that we have to appreciate that the answer to that question may change over time.

If you have questions or comments for Heather, she can be reached at heather.lindsey@state.or.us

- For those of you in the Salem area, the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities will be celebrating DD Awareness Month at 1 p.m. today in the State Capitol's Galleria. The celebration will include guest speakers (including Governor Kitzhaber and DHS Director Erinn Kelley-Siel), the unveiling of the annual awareness poster and DD Champion Award Winner presentations. This year the focus will be on employment. <http://ocdd.org>