



# Oregon Competitive Employment Project

Oregon Department of Human Services — Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

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*The mission of the Oregon Competitive Employment Project (Project) is to enhance the quality of life in Oregon by achieving, maintaining and advancing the competitive and inclusive employment of persons with disabilities. The Project is funded by a four-year Medicaid Infrastructure Grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and is part of the Oregon Department of Human Services, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.*

## SPD Supported Employment Effort Funded

The Project has agreed to support the participation of the Seniors and People with Disabilities Division (SPD) in a 13 state multi-year initiative intended to increase and improve the availability of supported employment services for persons with developmental disabilities. The Project has paid the first year dues necessary for SPD to join and participate in the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN). In addition, the Project will look at how else it can support SPD's participation in this initiative upon completion of SPD SELN planning activities.

SELN is sponsored by the National Association of State Developmental Disability Directors and the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at University of Massachusetts. The overall objective is to improve supported employment outcomes for persons with developmental disabilities across the nation. Oregon specific goals include:

### Year One:

- Establishing rates and funding allocations and reimbursements that emphasize integrated employment within the comprehensive waiver
- Developing effective outcome data gathering strategies based upon an individualized funding model
- Increase use of multiple or pooled funding sources as payment of rate for integrated employment, including Ticket to Work funding

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## Life of Collaboration

- Assist Oregon in establishing clear employment policy with expectations for the achievement of integrated employment
- Assist Oregon in identifying and implementing strategies for on-going provider training and capacity building to maintain and expand supported employment outcomes

## The next steps include

- An initial site visit to review the current status of Oregon's employment support system
- The design of a strategic plan and a technical assistance plan

*For more information, contact Molly Holsapple: Molly.S.Holsapple@state.or.us or (503) 945-9815*

## Continuing Application Filed

The Project recently submitted its continuation application to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The Project is funded through a four-year grant from CMS. The Project requested \$500,000 funding and permission to carryover \$250,000 in funding from 2006 for a total 2007 budget of \$750,000. CMS will notify the Project of application status shortly.

## New Project Manager Hired

**Sara Kendall** recently accepted the position of Project Manager of the Project. For the past seven years, Sara has been a manager with Louisiana's Department of Health and Hospitals. In this capacity, she has facilitated the development and coordinated the implementation of several Medicaid waivers for persons

with disabilities. She also has also been involved with MIG-funded activities in Louisiana. Prior to moving to Louisiana, Sara held a number of administrative positions with Portland-based vocational programs, including Developmental Systems, Inc. and United Cerebral Palsy of Oregon and Southwest Washington. Sara is scheduled to assume her new position in early October.

**Travis Wall**, the Project's current manager, will assume his new position as manager of the Policy & Program Unit of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Travis will continue to be involved with the Project but not on a day-to-day basis.

## County Mental Health Supported Employment Efforts Initiated

Addictions and Mental Health Division and the Project are working to improve supported employment services for persons with severe and persistent mental illness. Earlier this year, AMH sent a letter to county mental health systems soliciting interest in developing or refining mental health supported employment services with the assistance of AMH/Project mini-grants. Over a dozen mental health systems responded by submitting proposals. In turn, AMH and the Project reviewed the proposals and awarded grants to the mental health systems in Deschutes, Malheur and Marion counties.

Under the terms of the mini-grant agreements, the county mental health systems will implement supported employment programs, undergo ongoing reviews of service, and serve over eighty clients, with half placed in competitive employment. In exchange, each county will be provided with technical assistance

from Options for Southern Oregon, a nationally recognized leader in supported employment.

AMH and the Project are planning additional activities in this area. One idea being explored is sponsoring a state-level conference on mental health supported employment, with the intent of prompting further development of such services and demonstrating best practices. In addition, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services intends to add a staff position that would be responsible for working with county mental health systems and OVRS branch offices in developing and improving supported employment services for persons with mental illness.

*For more information, contact Mike Moore: Michael.W.Moore@state.or.us or (503) 947-5538.*

## **Transition to Employment Training Held**

23 students and their families recently attended the first transition-to-employment training held by the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities. These trainings, which were developed and are provided by the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities and are sponsored and underwritten by the Project, provide students with disabilities and family members of such individuals, with training on person-centered employment planning, job development, systems understanding, benefits planning, and advocacy. The intent of this training is to provide students and family members with the information and understanding necessary to successfully navigate disability programs and to obtain the services and supports necessary to become employed.

*For more information about this Project, contact Cynthia Owens: Cynthia.Owens@state.or.us or (503) 945-9931*

## **Transition Partners Program Trainings Held**

The Oregon Parent Training and Information Center (OrPTI) recently held two trainings for the Transition Partners Program in Medford and Tigard. Over 20 volunteers were trained to assist parents and students access and understand the services and supports of a variety of public agencies and programs that may be used to transition from school to employment. The volunteers will be matched to families and students requesting help on Individual Education Plans, Mediation or Transition from the OrPTI's helpline.

*For more information, contact the OrPTI at (503) 581-8156.*

## **Project Website Development**

In response to requests from partners and interested parties, the Project has developed a website for information about activities. The website location is: <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/vr/cep/>

## **Workgroups Convened**

The Project has assembled advisory workgroups to assist the development and implementation of activities. Workgroups have begun meeting on the following Project issue areas:

- Benefits Planning
- Employer Engagement
- Work Incentives
- Supported Employment for persons with developmental disabilities
- Supported Employment for persons with severe and persistent mental illness

- Employment Transportation for persons with disabilities

The workgroups meet as needed and no formalized meeting schedule is currently available. If you are interested in joining a workgroup, wish to learn more about the workgroups, or would like to be included on workgroup mailing lists, contact Paula Fitch at [paula.fitch@state.or.us](mailto:paula.fitch@state.or.us) or (503) 947-5469

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*This publication is published quarterly and funded through a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant from the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CFDA#11-P-92415/-01).*