



Oregon Competitive Employment Project

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Oregon Advocacy Center

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.

Project Sponsors Conference and Training

One of the Project's goals is to expand the availability of supported employment for persons with serious and persistent mental illness. Research has demonstrated the benefit and effectiveness of supported employment for persons with mental illness disabilities, but the availability of these services remains very limited in Oregon.

To increase evidence-based mental health supported employment, the Project, in partnership with the Addictions and Mental Health Division (AMH) sponsored a two day training on November 16 and 17 on supported employment practices and principles. Representatives from Deschutes, Marion, and Malheur counties' vocational rehabilitation, mental health agencies and disability navigators participated in the conference, which was held in Bend and co-hosted by Options for Southern Oregon.

Dr. Jonathon E. Larson, from the Illinois Institute of Technology's Rehabilitation Psychology Program, led the conference with a training session on motivational interviewing techniques. Attendees learned techniques and were provided tools to identify and address behavioral and attitudinal barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment.

Additional presenters from the Social Security Administration, Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Division, Addictions and Mental Health Division, and the Oregon Advocacy Center provided information on specific programs and services available to persons with disabilities.

On November 13 and 14, Dr. Larson provided training to

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Project sponsors, cont.

Options for Southern Oregon and LifeWorks Northwest, on how to incorporate motivational interviewing into existing supported employment projects. Both agencies are participants in Social Security's National Mental Health Treatment Study.

For more information and to view conference/training materials, go to <http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/vr/cep>

For more information on Social Security's National Mental Health Treatment Study go to <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/mentalhealth.htm>

Project and Partners to Develop Local Transportation Plans

Available, accessible and affordable transportation is essential to the employment of persons with disabilities but such transportation is unavailable to many persons with disabilities living in rural Oregon and outside of the I-5 corridor.

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Project are supporting five rural counties in the development of coordinated transportation plans with an emphasis on employment transportation for persons with disabilities. The Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) will provide regional consultants to local communities in Deschutes, Clatsop, Douglas, Umatilla and Yamhill counties to assist in development of these plans. The Project will review plans from each of the five counties that receive a grant award from ODOT and select a minimum of three counties for continued funding. Draft versions of the plans will be completed by January 31, 2007, grants awarded by ODOT in spring

2007, and implementation of plans will begin July 1, 2007.

For more information contact Sara Kendall at sara.kendall@state.or.us or 503-945-5857

Employer Education and Engagement Activities Initiated

In developing its strategic plan, the Project found that large numbers of persons with disabilities remain unemployed or underemployed because many employers do not understand that persons with disabilities, including those with severe disabilities, are employable. Moreover, many employers are unaware of the incentives and assistance available to them in the event they employ persons with disabilities.

Margoli Films out of Portland, Oregon completed filming an informational video about the City of Wilsonville's internship program for students with disabilities on November 21, 2006. The video was sponsored by Margoli Films and the Project. The Oregon Business Leadership Network (OBLN) will use the video as an educational tool for businesses and community partners to encourage expansion of internship programs in the state.

The Project and OBLN partnered to purchase the rights to Miami-Dade Florida's Business Leadership Network "My Abilities" campaign. The campaign consists of a two and a half minute on-camera public service announcement and print ads. The Project has released a Request for Proposal in order to re-shoot "My Abilities" in early 2007 with an Oregon focus. Once re-shot, the OBLN will be able to use it in engaging businesses across the state.

For more information about the OBLN & the internship program, visit <http://www.obln.org>

Project Staff and Partners Present at Annual Fall Conference

Research shows that individuals who receive benefits planning assistance are more likely to obtain employment, earn more and be less reliant on public benefits than similarly situated individuals who do not receive such assistance. However, present benefit planning arrangements in Oregon are limited to the Oregon Advocacy Center's (OAC) program, which has three certified benefits counselors, and a handful of part-time, private benefits planners. In contrast, the benefits planning systems of a number of neighboring states are exponentially larger than that of Oregon's.

Over the past year, the Project, working in partnership with OAC, the State Independent Living Council, OVRS, SPD, AMH and others, developed a plan for building a comprehensive and sustainable benefits planning system.

The Project made a presentation on efforts to expand the current system of benefits planning services and supports in Oregon on November 8th at the National Consortium for Health Systems Development's fall conference in Chicago. A national audience listened as Damon Terzaghi, Project Policy Analyst and Molly Sullivan, Advocate from the Oregon Advocacy Center talked about the process used to engage a multitude of community partners to develop a vision and plan to expand benefits planning in Oregon. States from Hawaii to Maine were thoroughly engaged by Oregon's model and eager to follow the evolution of this system.

For more information about the Project's benefits planning activities, contact Damon Terzaghi at (503) 947-5123 or damon.terzaghi@state.or.us

The conference covered a wide range of topics including strategies for engaging businesses and methods for data collection and program evaluation.

For more information about the conference visit <http://www.nchsd.org/conferencel/Fall2006NationalMigConference.cfm>

Planning Coordinator

As part of the ongoing efforts to expand benefits planning services in Oregon, the Project will be hiring a statewide benefits planning coordinator. This position will be responsible for developing training and technical assistance programs to local communities, as well as overseeing the regional benefits planning programs. The coordinator will ensure quality of services as well as collect and monitor program outcomes, and work with Project partners on sustaining the system after it is up and running. This is a great opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of Oregon's citizens with disabilities.

The position is housed in Oregon's beautiful capital city, Salem and pays a competitive wage with full benefits. It is a limited duration position that runs through December 31, 2008 with the possibility of a three year extension through 2011.

If you are interested in this position contact Sara Kendall at sara.kendall@state.or.us or 503-945-5857 as soon as possible!

CMS Grants Oregon Continued Funding!

Oregon's application for funding in 2007 under the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant program was successful. The Project looks forward to continuing the initiatives you have read about in this newsletter, as well as initiatives already under way in the areas of high school transition, supported employment for persons with developmental disabilities and traumatic brain injury, work incentives, peer mentoring and cultural competency.

Thanks to each and every one of you for all your dedication and hard work this past year. Anything is possible if we continue to work together to reach our common goals!

All of us at the Project wish you very happy holidays and a wonderful New Year.



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