

Welcome to

THE FOCUS

Oregon APSE's semi annual newsletter

With significant changes happening in the Employment First movement in Oregon, we strive to bring you useful information and to discuss current issues relevant to the employment of people with disabilities.



Board Talk

"Keeping Our Eyes on the Prize..."

It has been over 33 years since the concept of supported employment swept our nation. This year marked the 25th conference for APSE. Held in Indianapolis, the event provided opportunities to hear from celebrated professionals in our field, who literally invented the terms "supported employment," "job coaching," "customized employment," and "presumed competence." These leaders reminded us that not only have these industry terms guided us professionally, they are also embedded in the framework of our state and federal laws and policies.

Speakers examined both how far we have come in championing the cause of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) as paid contributing members of the workforce and how far we have to go – to see each person paid at regular wages, in regular work places. In 2013, across the nation most people

About Oregon APSE

Our mission is to promote equitable, integrated employment of people with disabilities that recognizes their contributions as community members.

We represent the Oregon chapter of the national Association of Persons Supporting Employment First. APSE is the only national organization with an exclusive focus on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Join us! Email oregonapse@gmail.com to become a member.

with IDD are still underemployed, not employed, or employed in segregated settings.

Oregon was often mentioned as an illustration of the great discrepancy between inclusive and sheltered settings. Speaker after speaker called for an end to sub-minimum wage and for a national commitment to paid integrated employment for all. It seemed to be the national charge, to implement already existing laws and policies, and to challenge ourselves to apply our innovation and creative expertise to making equitable economic opportunity available to all people with disabilities.



OR APSE Vice Chair, Debra McLean and Chair, Tara Asai at the national APSE Conference

These ideas were summed up in the words of [Allan Bergman](#), a keynote speaker who eloquently stated:

“In spite of nearly 30 years of numerous federal laws, regulations, federal court decisions and billions of dollars promoting integrated employment and economic self sufficiency, the one word synonym today for adults with significant disabilities is “Poverty.” This “poverty” is projected to cost the federal government One Trillion Dollars in 2017 and it is not sustainable. It is time for action plans to combat disability poverty and assure integrated employment outcomes by aligning resources and raising expectations for each child and adult with disabilities to be productive members of an inclusive society.”

Did You Know?

476

Oregonians with
IDD were served
by VR in 2011

18

Average hours
worked per
week

About 3 in 10
people found jobs
(140 or 29.4%)



\$160

Average weekly earnings

StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, Winter 2012. statedate.info

HOT TOPIC

What makes a "Qualified" Employment Specialist?

On April 10, 2013, Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber issued Executive Order No. 13-04. The Order prescribes strategies related to improving employment services and outcomes for approximately 21,000 individuals experiencing IDD, including about 12,000 working age adults. The Order calls for a schedule of planning and development tasks that must be completed by the Department of Human Services (DHS) between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014, including establishing competencies for the provision of Employment Services.

The Order states, "By January 1, 2014, the Office of Developmental Disability Services (ODDS) and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVRs) will establish competencies for the provision of Employment Services". Furthermore, "By July 1, 2016, ODDS and OVRs will only purchase services from providers that are licensed, certified, credentialed or otherwise qualified by Oregon Administrative Rule".

With the Oregon Employment Leadership Network (OELN) and the ODEP federal grant, Oregonians will continue to have opportunities to participate in an array of training. Though positive news, even with training, how can Individuals receiving services be assured that an Employment Specialist has the skills to obtain and support them in a great job? Will certifying Employment Specialists make a

difference?

Establishing Oregon Supported Employment Competencies and Certification

Following are three known resources used nationally to establish competencies for certifying Employment Specialists. Looking at the overall scope of each as well as comparing the common and unique topic areas gives us what many believe are the important components to consider.

[APSE's Supported Employment Competencies and the Certified Employment Support Professional Exam](#) (CESP), a broad perspective with no associated curriculum developed by experts across the country. This past June, the first eight Oregonians who took the CESP passed! Of this group, six had either taken the Highline Community College or OELN employment classes. Two OELN participants (Employment Specialists from different provider organizations) stated that OELN was "wonderful" and "awesome," and that by taking the OELN class, and studying additional topics such as benefits planning, they were well prepared to pass the exam.

[The Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators](#) (ACRE), certifies providers that have a minimum of 40 hours of training or professional development by an approved resource. Virginia Commonwealth University's Work Support and Griffin-Hammis' Customized Employment are two examples of approved ACRE training resources.

[The Employment Outcomes Professional II](#) (DTG-EMP) by Allen Anderson, is a two-

day training required of all OVRs vendors providing job development and job support services. ([Click here for a side-by-side comparison of national Employment Specialist certifications.](#))

Expert Opinion

In his 2002 white paper, [Options for Qualifying Providers and Assuring Quality Services: A Blueprint for Developing Responsive Providers](#), Michael Callahan of Marc Gold & Associates, states:

“The issue of securing *Qualified Providers* is inherent in any discussion of the exercise of informed choice in employment for persons with severe disabilities....However, when individuals are offered increased choice, qualifications that focus on and favor traditional providers will likely decrease the options available. In fact, in some areas, there may only be one or two qualified providers—or perhaps none at all...It is therefore essential for funders...to strike a balance among issues that are often at odds: a) to assure that consumers receive quality services, b) to offer a range of options from which individuals may choose, c) to determine who monitors quality, and d) decide who gets to determine the relevance of outcomes.... **Possibly the most basic assurance of quality service and outcome in our society comes from the indication of satisfaction by the customer.**”

Conclusion

Oregon APSE believes that it's a good idea to have qualified, competent providers required to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. We recommend that the State carefully analyze how they certify the

individual Employment Specialist. To build capacity, flexibility is essential. To increase the overall provider pool capacity, OVRs must consider other certification options besides DTG-EMP.

We recommend that ODDS and OVRs recognize a broad scope of training options to becoming a certified Employment Specialist. By doing so, the Individual Provider and the Provider organization can develop their unique strategy for gaining required skills. Oregon could accept both the APSE and ACRE certificates as one approach that would give providers many options.

Effective supported employment is a collaborative service. Together, ODDS and OVRs must decide on the desired competencies and assure that they represent best or promising practices. Required mastery should be established through Oregon Administrative Rule with both agencies sharing a common compliance process.

In addition, whether Oregon develops their own certification or relies upon a nationally recognized certification, we recommend that there be an option to qualify family members or others who are not professionals to perform employment services. Oregon's own *Family Management and Careers, Community and Family* grants demonstrated the effectiveness of non-traditional job developers and we cannot lose this additional valuable resource.

What do you think about the Employment Competencies and Certification process? Share your ideas with us on [Oregon APSE's Facebook page.](#)



A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

By Laura Owens, APSE Executive Director

Creating a Template for Change

In recent months, there has been a lot of focus on the future of employment services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Oregon. In April, following pressure from the U.S. Department of Justice, Oregon was forced to reevaluate the expensive and constrictive sheltered workshop placement model (\$30 million per year). However, Governor Kitzhaber's response has fallen short to confront the fundamental systemic barriers that limit individuals with disabilities to find "real jobs with real wages."

National APSE is concerned that the state of Oregon's plan does not make measurable statements concerning the quality, quantity, or outcomes of the employment services in the state. Particularly, APSE is concerned that the definition of integrated employment includes work crews and enclaves of up to eight people with disabilities and no recommendation to wages at or above minimum wage. Another issue of concern is the increasing use of segregated Day Habilitation programs that serve as a misinformed "choice" not included in the prohibition of sheltered workshop entrance for

transition students.

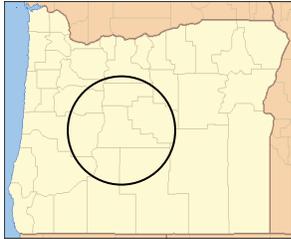
The Governor's Executive Order does however contain beneficial elements by providing a template for system rebalancing and interagency collaboration. Closing the front door is an essential component to reducing state support of sheltered work but the lack of an effective commitment to integrated employment will restrict any true systems change. For this executive order to be effective there has to be a commitment to change the current funding structure, incentivize systems change, a clear presumption of employability for people with disabilities. We are excited to continue working with and supporting Oregon APSE to ensure integrated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities!

APSE is the *only* national organization with an *exclusive focus* on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Through advocacy and education, APSE advances employment and self-sufficiency for all people with disabilities. Learn more by visiting their website: www.apse.org

AROUND THE STATE

The Right Job Match

Staff at the Opportunity Foundation of Central Oregon (OFCO) seek the right job match when people say they are ready for community-based jobs. They work



closely with individuals, families, community partners and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselors to match people to the right job in a local business and provide ongoing supports. They also provide customized employment by creating new jobs within a business based on an individual's skills and interests and an employer's needs.

Currently, OFCO supports about 35 people funded through VR and another 20 people in different phases of supported employment. Many of these people, like Alex, become successfully employed in part-time jobs.

Alex worked in the Mill for two years. The Mill is one of OFCO's job sites where people with disabilities manufacture wood products. Last year, he asked for a different job in Bend. As a result, Alex enrolled with VR during the fall of 2012 and began the process of job preparation. His employment specialist created a job portfolio and they began the search for a new job. A short time later, a job that matched his skills and interests came available at a transit system in Bend called



Alex working at The Breeze in Bend

The Breeze. Alex was hired in December and quickly learned his job cleaning the exterior of commuter buses. Currently, he is happy with his part-time job and has a good working relationship with his employer. He works 15 to 20 hours per week. His job coach checks in regularly and his employer is very satisfied with his work performance.

Preparing for growth

With the Executive Order and a renewed focus on Employment First efforts at the State level, Supported Employment Program Manager Lydia Hemsley expects to achieve more employment success stories like Alex's. "We are trying to figure out ways to work supported employment into all of our programs." OFCO provides residential services and vocational supports to over 225 people living in the Bend, Redmond, and Madras areas.

To prepare for growth in customized and supported employment services, they are training staff "across the board." Such services provide access to jobs that pay minimum or prevailing wages at businesses in the community. Employment specialists also educate individuals, families and community

partners about the types of jobs people want, employment options, and the supports available to help someone find and keep a job. These supports include job coaching and benefits counseling offered by VR. Benefits counseling identifies ways that an individual can earn income and use work incentives to save money or increase earnings while maintaining SSI/SSDI and/or Medicaid-funded healthcare benefits.

Challenges

Despite these efforts, many families express concerns about the safety of their family member at a job in the community and many individuals are not sure they want to work at a community job. OFCO addresses these challenges by giving individuals and families “as much information, education and time as possible. Giving people a range of options helps them make informed choices.” Employment specialists use resulting decisions to determine the direction of employment services.

Surprisingly, some people who say they are not ready for work at a job in the community quickly decide they want to work after exploring their interests and options. In Jefferson County, one person who was struggling to figure out what he wanted to do started a job working a few hours per week. After he figured out what worked for him, he asked to increase his hours. This raises an important point. Challenges are unique to each individual. In developing the best job match, a person’s success is easier to achieve when you figure out what works best for him/her compared to “placing” people in a job just because it is there.

Discovery

OFCCO uses a discovery process called *Discovering Personal Genius*, which enables them to learn a person’s skills, strengths, personality traits, interests, and more. After this process, “we understand the person better and have a focus point. We identify three vocational themes and, as a team, brainstorm a list of different companies that meet those themes. Once themes are developed, they find out who knows someone in those businesses. Many times it starts with a tour of the business.” This approach has been very successful in helping people find and keep real jobs in the community.

OREGON APSE NEWS

Vice Chair Receives National Recognition

We are proud to announce that Oregon APSE’s Vice Chair, Debra McLean, received honorable mention as an esteemed nominee for the 2013 APSE Professional Award at the national conference in June.

The award recognizes individuals for outstanding state-of-the-art practices and professional achievements in integrated employment as a job coach, job developer, employment specialist, rehabilitation counselor, or other agency personnel. Though she didn’t receive the award, we know Debra lives and breathes its merits.

Debra is deeply committed to the promotion of real, integrated, community-based employment for individuals with IDD.

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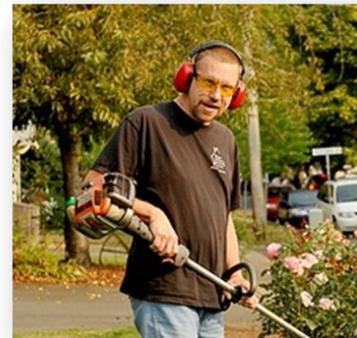
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A Cool Life

"By Working Hard, Good Things Follow"

Mike Gregory is on a journey to integrated employment. Currently, he works in a training position with a local community business as a landscape maintenance person. Here he takes pride in fixing things when others cannot. "I love my job on the yard crew. I love it when they can't get anything running. I get it running."

Mike is a native Oregonian. He grew up in the farmlands of the Central Willamette Valley, where he learned the value of work from his mother. "By working hard, good things follow." She also taught him self-respect, honesty, integrity, and the value of supporting each other.



Mike at work

Mike's interest in making things and helping others began in high school. Once, he found some sheet metal that someone threw away and used it to make an oil funnel for his mom's truck. After graduation, Mike left home. He bounced around different jobs and living situations until he met "Blondie," a residential service provider. Mike's relationship with Blondie turned out to be pivotal.

During the time that he lived with her, working became central to his life. He began to pursue work experiences that involved his strengths and interests. Mike found that he has strong organizational skills, likes being the boss, and "can build anything out of wood." Besides building things, he also enjoys working with machines, being around people, and being "out and about –

workin,' shoppin,' going places.”
Now, Mike lives in his own apartment with supports and his beloved cat. “I have my job, my apartment, and Grandpa Kitty.” Mike is connected to his community and enjoys his independence. His friends and coworkers live nearby, and his mom frequently visits. He travels, listens to country music, and lives by rules familiar



Mike and Grandpa Kitty

to most of us—be trustworthy and loyal. Don't be late to work. Let others talk. Be a friend. Eat good food, and most importantly, don't forget to clean the litter box.

When asked why he works, he laughs, “Cause I make money. I'm savin' for a trip. Goin' to Hawaii... And Grandpa needs food too.”

Mike is a hard worker. Last year, he received the Oregon Rehabilitation Association's *Worker of the Year* award for his outstanding performance with The Lawn Rangers Yard Maintenance Company in Independence. “I loved that. Felt good and important.” His mom was with him when he received the award. “Mom cried 'cause she really liked it. I think she was

proud of me.” Mike has learned what he likes and does best from previous work experience and his current job on the yard crew. Using this information, he's identified his dream job at Roth's, a grocery store near



2012 Worker of the Year

where he lives. His employment services provider is following Mike's lead to develop an opportunity there “working with groceries, putting stuff in freezers, putting things away, movin' shipments off of big trucks, building stacks of things on end aisles and helping people find stuff.” If a good fit is created, Mike will reach a huge milestone in his journey to integrated employment.

SAVE THE DATE

Pacific Northwest Employment Forum

November 14~15

Ambridge Center, Portland OR

Keynote by [Dale DiLeo](#), internationally known speaker and author

\$40 APSE members & self-advocates /
\$75 non-members / \$15 students

[Book the Early Bird Special at
Courtyard Marriot by 10/31/13](#)

[Registration coming soon!](#)



Debra McLean (5th from left in back) with other 2013 APSE Professional Award Nominees

Over the past 25 years, she has been a fierce advocate, a powerful educator, and a true leader in the Employment First movement. She demonstrates daily that everyone can work despite significant challenges.

As an example, Debra worked with a woman under the auspices of the Oregon Psychiatric Security Review Board (PSRB) to start a food business. The PSRB assumes jurisdiction over convicted persons found to be "guilty except for insanity."

Despite restrictions against travel outside her County, using her home phone without permission, and hearing from staff that having a food business and pursuing job development were "delusional," they persisted. Debra assisted the woman to obtain benefits planning, find resources, establish business contacts, and negotiate within the mental health system. With Debra's mentoring, the woman developed her own product, which was sold through

her website and at food fairs.

As demonstrated, Debra's unyielding beliefs in a person's potential make her a powerful advocate for integrated employment. Her advocacy efforts were critical to the development of Oregon's 2008 Employment First policy and she continues to push for systems change. In short, the impact of Debra's efforts is seen in most places where best practices in job development and person-centered employment planning are demonstrated.

Debra continually impresses us with her unwavering belief that everyone can work and her dedication to creating better systems for Oregonian's with disabilities to achieve their dreams. The best thing about her is that she does this work simply because she recognizes the potential of people. We are certain that Debra McLean embodies the uncompromising Employment First vision that APSE represents. Congratulations Debra!

Side-by-side Comparison of National Employment Specialist Certifications

Topic	Description	APSE	ACRE	DTG – EMP
Introduction to Supported Employment	Values, rights, roles, legislation, best practice, funding, history.	X	X	
Assessment and Career Planning	Vocational Evaluation and Assessment, person centered planning, career planning, writing vocational objectives.	X	X	
Marketing and Job Development	Marketing tools, understanding work cultures, negotiating with employers, job carving, EEO, Work Incentives how to close.	X	X	X
Job Acquisition	Decision- making, impact on benefits, preparation.		X	
On-the Job Training and Supports	Team communications, job analysis, systematic instruction, positive behavior supports.	X	X	
On-Going Supports	Sources for long-term supports, working with families and employers, evaluating services, collaborating with community partners, review of the supported individual's performance.	X	X	
Other Topics	Can be specified by the training agency.		X	
Managing Benefits	Work incentives.	X		
Organizational Change	Ethics, strategies for change, working as a team, working as a generalist vs. a specialist..	X		
Special Populations	How to support individuals with different disabilities and cultures.	X	X	
Self-Employment	Pros and cons, developing a business plan, job creation and funding.	X		
Employer Relations	How to initiate relations, analyze employer needs/expectations, connect employer needs to candidate solutions, add value to the employer relationship, be innovative with employers, and long-term viable employer relationships.			X