

3/11/16

**To: Employment First stakeholders**

**From: Acacia McGuire Anderson, Interim Employment First Coordinator**

**Re: Employment First: Core competencies and credentialing**

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

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The Governor's Executive Order requires that both the Office of Developmental Disability Services (ODDS) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) establish "[competency-based training standards](#)" for employment specialists. It also requires that ODDS and VR only purchase employment services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) from agencies or individual providers that are licensed, certified, or credentialed from nationally-recognized programs.

The Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) certificate through APSE (Association of People Supporting Employment First) and the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) certificate are two nationally-recognized credential standards.

The CESP and ACRE credential is one way to indicate that a professional has achieved the [core competencies](#) published by DHS. The CESP and ACRE credential helps job seekers know that staff providing assistance are knowledgeable, skilled, and competent in helping them achieve competitive integrated employment.

In an effort to increase capacity and ensure qualified employment support professionals across Oregon, the Employment First initiative has helped to fund CESP exam sites to promote opportunities for providers to sit for the exam. As a result of this effort, Oregon currently has [120 CESP-certified employment specialists](#), the highest number in the country. The state with the second highest number has 91.

Upcoming CESP exam opportunities are on the APSE website. The next exam is May 24 in Bend: <http://apse.org/certified-employment-support-professional/exam-opportunities/>

[ACRE](#) offers two-levels of certification. The basic certificate of achievement is a minimum of 40 hours of ACRE-qualified training. The professional certificate requires a year of employment service experience and 40 more hours of ACRE-

qualified training. The Washington Initiative for Supported Employment (WISE) supports the Core Supported Employment Training (CSET) series with funding by Oregon DHS. The CSET series is in the process of becoming an ACRE-qualified training. The CSET series is often referred to as the Oregon Employment Learning Network (OELN) training series and is designed to meet Oregon's published core competencies, as well as prepare employment professionals to take the CESP exam.

The CESP and ACRE credentials are just one of many capacity-building strategies necessary to make sure that people with I/DD are able to access job services in a timely manner. The Employment First [Training & Technical Assistance Plan](#) outlines many of these strategies, including increasing capacity in rural areas, expanding current provider capacity by shifting or transforming services, and a focus on seamless transition from school to work.

If you have comments or other questions, please email them to [employment.first@state.or.us](mailto:employment.first@state.or.us).

~ Acacia