



## **Community Briefing: 2022 ODHS Legislative Priorities Preview**

January 14, 2022 *(Updated 1/28/22)*

### **Questions & Answers**

The questions in this document were submitted during the January 14, 2022 ODHS Community Briefing. This document contains responses submitted by ODHS programs.

#### **Program questions**

##### **Aging and People with Disabilities (APD)**

**What are the actions and accountability for increasing the training and availability of direct care staff in senior communities?**

APD, with support from the Oregon Legislature, is increasing the scope and depth of its provider workforce development and retention efforts, including training. The investments being made as a result of the 2021 session include:

- Increased rates paid for Oregonians living in long-term care facilities, which in-turn will support the opportunity for higher wages for staff at assisted living, memory care, skilled nursing facilities and in-home care services.
- Enabling APD to specify nighttime staffing for residential care facilities that provide memory care.
- Establishing an Oregon Essential Workforce Health Care Program to provide health care benefits to employees of long-term care facilities, residential care facilities and in-home care agencies that participate in a medical assistance program.
- Increased long-term care services workforce development and training.

These new measures are in process of being implemented.

Additionally, the state is rolling out required training for homecare workers, which was passed by the Legislature in 2018.

#### **Child Welfare**

**How is the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) looking to increase mental health services/funds for the youth in care? Especially with the problems related to the pandemic.**

While we cannot speak on behalf of OHA, from the Child Welfare lens, OHA:

- Received FEMA funding to deploy contracted nurses, nursing assistants and mental health technicians for a limited time basis to support Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) providers while they hire permanent staff, preventing further loss of functional capacity.
- Provided additional funding to residential workers for childcare, clinical supervision and for facility safety enhancements.
- Provided additional funding for recruitment and retention of residential workforce.
- Instituted vacancy payments available to PRTF providers to pay for the cost of unfilled beds.
- Implemented a 10% rate increase that applied to PRTF providers from July 2020 through June 2021. An extension of this rate increase was approved for July 2021 through December 2021 and will continue to be evaluated throughout the declared emergency.
- OHA received legislative funds for \$7.25 Million to fund expansion and enhancements within the PRTF System. OHA released an initial Request for Proposal on December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, for housing and infrastructure. PRTF expansion is included for applications to expand this service.
- OHA received legislative funds for \$7.25 Million to fund expansion and enhancements within the PRTF System. Solicitation for these funds is projected to be available starting March 2022. This is intended to recruit providers to initiate new capacity projects.

Additionally, OHA has collaborated with Child Welfare to identify prioritized requests within the 1115 Medicaid Demonstration Waiver request (such as the ability for PRTF providers to collaborate with Child Welfare on identifying capacity for the population of children we serve).

**Are there plans to expand respite services to support resource and natural families and Behavioral Rehabilitation Services (BRS) providers to support youth in care?**

Child Welfare received \$14.5 million from the Oregon legislature to create a centralized respite program. The development of this program will allow expanded respite services to not only our resource homes, but families of origin as well that Child Welfare is connected with. The increased respite services will provide support more often and reach an increased number of Tribal and certified resource homes. Treatment Services is also expanding their respite services and we are working jointly across programs to craft rule and procedure.

**Will ODHS be providing updates on how the agency is shifting from a focus on intervention (crisis) to prevention (supporting families to remain intact when possible)? How can system partners learn about new prevention programs/services/supports?**

You can learn more about the shift from intervention to prevention and the work happening with the Child Welfare Division Vision for Transformation by attending one of the bi-monthly Child Welfare Community Connection public virtual meetings (next one is March 16, 2-3 pm), checking out the recently published [Community Engagement webpage](#) and signing up to receive communication from Child Welfare. We will be adding a specific section on Family Preservation updates to the Community Connection bimonthly newsletter for partners,

providers, and community in Spring, as demonstration sites begin to implement Family Preservation and Oregon Child Welfare reflects the Vision for Transformation in action.

## **Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS)**

### **How will ODDS work to improve their relationship with communities of color?**

ODDS is working to improve relationship with diverse communities at the central and at the local level through work with our Case Management Entities (CMEs). ODDS developed the ODDS Service Equity Plan that highlights six areas of priority for our program, one of which is focused on engaging local communities & community organizations. ODDS has a long-term goal of developing a Service Equity Council that would spearhead the development of a system-wide service equity plan and dashboards. ODDS has been piloting new ways to bring diverse voices to the table, including through partnerships with local community organizations.

### **Relating to ODDS, what is your strategy and what resources are you advocating to bring DSP wages up to a living wage level. With the minimum wage increases, we are back to barely above or equal to what fast food pays their workers.**

ODDS is very aware of the challenges that providers are facing. We have been working hard for several years on supporting providers as much as possible to help ease the staffing shortages. As you know, our system already had staffing challenges before COVID-19 that the pandemic has only intensified.

Just a few of the actions ODDS has taken includes:

- \$10 million in grants for recruitment and retention of staff to provider agencies in June 2021.
- \$20 million in funding released in September and October 2021 for retention and recruitment of group home direct support professionals.
- COVID funding for adult foster homes to support their workforce.
- \$500 incentive payments to workers in group homes in December 2021.
- \$5 million in grants to support employment and day support activities providers in December 2021.
- Launched Impact Oregon website for recruiting new workers to the field. Providers can post their jobs for free on this website.
- Streamlined regulations and policies to assist providers and case management entities during the pandemic.

The legislature also approved rate increases of 8.3% that went into effect on July 21, 2021 and new rate models that will increase funding significantly when they go into effect as of July 1, 2022. However, we are aware that many providers are paying higher wages than those rates now and we are in discussions with provider groups about this situation.

### **We appreciate the gains we have made in wages for the Direct Professional Workforce that supports people who live and thrive with I/DD. However we are still in crisis. What is the plan for future investments in these wages? Keeping in mind this dedicated Workforce represents women, people of color and other represented populations?**

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## **Self-Sufficiency Programs (SSP)**

### **What does a culturally responsive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) system mean?**

A culturally responsive TANF system means the TANF program will be conducting equity reviews and basing changes to the program on community input. We want to make sure the TANF program is not unintentionally harming Black families, families of color and rural families. Additionally, the voices of individuals within these communities will be asked to share their lived experiences and thoughts on how the program can improve to meet a family's needs.

### **How many employees are currently working in the VEC (ONE Customer Service Center)?**

We have roughly 742 VEC employees across the state. The exact number of VEC employees fluctuates regularly due to position vacancies. This number includes both eligibility and support staff.

### **What are the TANF changes for increasing equity or decreasing disparities**

Below are the items the ODHS TANF program is asking to be approved during the 2022 Legislative Session:

1. A non-recurrent short-term payment sent out as a clothing allowance three times a year (fall, winter, and summer). The intent of the payment is to help families pay for seasonal and weather appropriate clothing for their children.
2. End full-family disqualifications in the TANF JOBS program. This change would assign 75 percent of the grant to the dependent child(ren). During the disqualification process only the adult portion of the grant (25 percent) would be reduced.
  - TANF data shows that Black families, families in Tribal nations, and families of color are more likely to receive a TANF disqualification. Ending the full family sanction means only the adult portion of the grant is reduced. Additional training and guidance to family coaches has been utilized to increase awareness and use of the current disqualification process.
3. Increase the resource limit for new applicants (except for individuals receiving an intentional program violation) to \$10,000. The change will allow families to keep more resources available if a crisis occurs once they leave TANF.
  - [Research indicates](#) that the mean bank account balance for non-White families is significantly lower than White families. For example, White families have a mean of \$51,600 while Black families have a mean of \$13,300. This means that Black families would need to utilize almost the entirety of their life savings before accessing TANF. While the same is true for White families, they do not have the

additional burden of having to navigate through systems that have been built to work against them due to their race.

4. Expansion of the Family Support and Connections (FS&C) program to provide additional access for TANF families as well as those receiving SNAP food benefits and to provide culturally responsive services to all parts of the state. FS&C works with families at higher risk of having child welfare involvement, through parenting classes and other supports.

### **What kind of mix of positions are being requested in the ~328 staff to reduce wait times & processing times?**

The positions being requested are to reduce wait times and processing times for the programs in the ONE system that include medical, food, cash, and childcare benefits. The types of positions requested are:

- 200 eligibility workers
- 16 supervisors
- 16 lead workers
- 86 support staff
- 10 Human Resource analysts

### **How will you and staff make customer service better than now at the branch offices?**

As we continue to embrace equity and inclusion in our practices, we are making concerted efforts to ensure our workforce is representative of the communities we serve and their lived experiences. With the goal of providing equitable access, this will be an ongoing effort in our hiring to ensure we have the right workforce and language skill sets to meet the needs of our communities.

In addition, all district leaders have set equity inclusion goals at the local level, these vary depending on community, but all are intended to improve outcomes for Oregonians we serve.

## **Vocational Rehabilitation**

**When we talk about strengthening Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) will that also be paired with holding businesses accountable for not providing reasonable accommodations, or not hiring people with disabilities at all? This is a big issue I've come across this year.**

VR is a resource to businesses, growing partnerships by providing information and education on disability in the workplace, specifically in their workplace. To do so, we create an environment of support to empower business to successfully recruit and retain individuals with disabilities. While VR is not a compliance agency like the Bureau of Labor & Industries and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, VR does proactively engage with public and private sector businesses to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The VR workforce team provides information about reasonable accommodation during

conversations with businesses, during disability awareness trainings and through referral to subject matter experts such as the [NW ADA Center](#) and the [Job Accommodation Network](#). By sharing information, education, and resources, we invite change within the workplace from how the business engages in outreach to onboarding, support and retention of individuals with disabilities.

## Department questions

**For consistency and integrity, what is/will be the process for grievances regarding discrimination (whether officially filed or communicated to supervisors and management) if these are the priorities? For clarity, these are grievances clients have about workers.**

The Governor's Advocacy Office (GAO) oversees both formal complaints and discrimination investigations, the difference being that GAO is the sole discrimination investigation entity while customer service complaints may be addressed at many different levels of management (informally too, but formal is defined by the below Oregon Administrative Rules). Complaints may be made about individual workers, but also processes and administration generally as well.

Allegations of discrimination (to be reported to and investigated by GAO staff)

**Oregon Administrative Rule 407-005-0030**

<https://secure.sos.state.or.us/oard/viewSingleRule.action?ruleVrsnRsn=80231>

Formal complaints (may be initiated locally or sent directly to the GAO at the complainant's discretion)

**Oregon Administrative Rule 407-005-0100 through 407-005-0120**

<https://secure.sos.state.or.us/oard/displayDivisionRules.action?selectedDivision=1625>

Complainants may use the attached form which is available on the GAO website (<https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/aboutdhs/pages/gao.aspx>) and ODHS branch offices. The rules do not require the form and the GAO will initiate a case for any new ODHS complaint no matter the format.

**For years, Oregon entities have received funding for Oregon which includes Tribal Nations, what will be new to ensure equal access, services for Tribal Nations folks. And what will transparency and accountability look like for those who received the funds to provide services?**

Tribal Affairs is exploring with ODHS on how we can either earmark or develop carve-out funding to tribal nations. Tribes shouldn't have to compete with other entities especially if there are needs unfulfilled. Ensuring the state has open communication and strong relationships with our tribes will bring transparency and accountability.

**How is ODHS looking to build consistency and transparency as it invests in community partnerships? For instance, we will certainly want to ensure that Oregon's many disability rights activists and service providers are included in the conversation about how to expand**

**these services at the state level. How will ODHS ensure that there is transparency in who is at the table for these conversations?**

The way to build consistency and transparency is by engaging community. Community engagement encompasses a more comprehensive approach, creating practices and institutionalized mechanisms that share power and vest decision-making control in marginalized communities. When utilized for the purpose of increasing community power and agency for problem solving, community engagement is guided by a few key principles:

- Honor the wisdom, voice, and experience of community.
- Treat participants with integrity and respect
- Be transparent about motives and power dynamics
- Share decision making and initiative leadership.
- Engage in continuous reflection and willingness to change course.

**How will the Community Engagement structure incorporate non-technology dependent strategies so that older adults are aware, invited and can participate?**

We will incorporate these strategies by going to where community is at. It's essential we meet community where they are. We need to understand that some people are not comfortable coming into the office. We need to be part of these groups and listen carefully to what they have to say.

**Community engagement strategy. Does this fund more talking or investment in actions?**

This strategy is about investment and actions. Service-in-place engagement efforts are essential to be able to achieve transformative community engagement. Traditional methods of engagement typically looked like the agency organizing a forum once or twice a year and asking community members from racial and ethnic communities or other marginalized groups to attend. These efforts have not yielded outcomes of stronger relationships, collaborations, nor more importantly better life outcomes for these communities. Instead of having community come to "us," best practice suggests that effective engagement efforts should focus on building relationships and trust wherever communities are and that will be a part of our strategy. This could include mobile units, ODHS Community Centers, or other approved strategies.

**What benchmarks or checks and balances will be put in place? Tribal Nations have always heard the nice words and many promises.... what will be different this round?**

The Office of Equity and Multicultural Services (OEMS) will ensure community voice by establishing a Community Engagement Advisory Council and staffed by the Community Engagement Manager. The manager's role will be to inform ODHS programs and partners about the emerging community needs and opportunities. This Community Engagement Advisory Council will be made up of those communities who are experiencing service inequities in the services ODHS provides.

**I hope engagement with communities of colors will include resources to help increase diversity within the provider capacity (i.e. Direct Support Professionals, Foster homes, small business residential providers, personal care workers, home care workers).**

OEMS has planned a position focused on provider outreach.

**How are you going to make sure that the areas hard fought for don't get left behind because the new push is for LBGQ that the needs of ADA are getting left behind and put on the shelf because the other is so much in the forefront.**

ODHS has committed to leading inclusively leads with race and intersectionality to address systemic oppression that impact all protected classes. An example of this would be bringing together representatives from our employee resource groups and equity and inclusion committees who have those lived experiences to help inform policy, practice and shared voices in decision making. It is important that all voices are brought to the table for discussion on ODHS improvement of service delivery and increased community engagement.

**You are saying we need to have a better prepared workforce to support equity goals what is being done to help support our youth to enter into these fields and on-going support in securing positions?**

Supporting our youth in developing their skillset to engage in human service positions in a manner that is meaningful, fulfilling and rewarding is very important to our transformation. We have existing relationships with colleges and universities particularly in social work departments e.g. (B.S.W. and M.S.W.), tribal governments and community-based organizations to enhance our engagement strategies and recruitment efforts. In addition, we have an existing employee resource group structure that supports the retention and promotion of employees when they enter our workforce.

**When you talk about building the future how are you bringing in equity into the hiring process so that people from those communities, who hold those identities will be in leadership roles and a variety of roles?**

Our agency is evolving into an inclusive, anti-racist organization where equity is not just encouraged, it is expected. We are intentionally transforming the way we are hiring and retaining a diverse and qualified workforce. And, we start by engaging with communities whom we serve to develop and nurture a partnership that helps us to understand the needs of the community. We show up at events and we strive to develop a meaningful working relationship with communities where we are the advocates and coaches for those who are looking for a career in State government. When we are new to a community, we seek the assistance of our workforce who have an established presence to introduce us to the members of their community. We are also striving to meet the job seeker where they are at. Not every community has broadband or a library with internet. We are creating processes to accept paper applications. We are in the process of bringing the recruiters to the community where they can assist with resume writing, mock interviews or navigating our jobs page.

Internally, we are integrating equity into:

- Job postings, using inclusive and plain language at the forefront of an announcement, using various social networking platforms, engaging in culturally specific newspapers
- Position descriptions where diversity, equity and inclusion are embedded in daily operations of duties
- Interview questions
- Reference check questions



- Interview panels

Lastly, we're establishing programming that will support internal applicants from resume and cover letter reviews to performing mock interviewing so internal staff will have opportunities to hone practices.

At the beginning of 2022, Human Resources added staff to help prioritize our resource offerings from online guides, tools, and trainings to providing managers and staff information and training on all things Recruitment and Classification/Compensation. An important part of our future learning and development portfolio will include a variety of mediums from web-based training sessions to job rotations that further develop an employee's skillset to prepare them for whatever career opportunities they wish to pursue.