

12-22-17

**To: Employment First stakeholders**

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

**Re: [Employment First](#): Looking back at 2017**

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

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I wanted to take this opportunity to look back at the many accomplishments achieved throughout our employment system in the past year. I recognize that everyone has had to adapt to a lot of change in the past few years. Ultimately, we are all striving to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to become healthier and safer by being more integrated into their communities. I appreciate how much you all have done to help support our goal that anyone who wants to work has the opportunity and support to do so.

Here are just a few Employment First accomplishments from 2017:

- Published the [Employment First Outcomes and Successes Report](#) in October 2017, which showed that 1,111 people were working in community jobs with supports in March 2017, a 32 percent increase from the previous year. There was also a 46 percent increase in people working 20 or more hours per week.
- Launched the second phase of the [I Work We Succeed](#) outreach and marketing campaign.
- Redesigned the [Employment Outcomes System](#) to highlight employment provider agency capacity with a new red/yellow/green light system to help case managers, individuals and families make informed decisions.
- Held [Meet at the Mountain IV](#), with more 350 attendees coming together to network and discuss best practices around Employment First.
- In partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation and Oregon Department of Education, ODDS developed a summer work experience [Request for Applications](#) to increase job opportunities for young people with disabilities.
- Awarded more than 20 organizations throughout Oregon with [innovation grants](#) to increase capacity and outreach efforts.
- Issued additional transformation grants to help provider agencies transform to community-based employment services.
- Revised ODDS and VR trainings based on stakeholder feedback.

- Peer-to-Peer Employment Project, a collaboration between DHS, the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Oregon Self-Advocacy Coalition, implemented classes in Eugene, Portland and central Oregon. Peer mentors helped participants understand how to use their services to find community jobs. Peer mentors co-facilitated four classes of up to 12 people with I/DD. They also collaborated with local disability programs and community partners to help participants work towards employment goals.

Thank you for helping to improve employment services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I wish you all a wonderful 2018.

~ Acacia