



May 26, 2022

To: Employment First Partners, including Case Management Entities, Providers and VR Counselors
From: Acacia McGuire Anderson, Statewide Employment First Coordinator
Re: Employment exception request process

The Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS) continues working to refine Oregon's developmental disabilities system to be more person-centered. ODDS is refocusing on what each person needs in order to have a full life based on their unique needs, interests and preferences. The name ODDS has given to this effort is the **Compass Project**.

Part of the Compass Project is a new assessment tool called the Oregon Needs Assessment. In the past, ODDS used several needs assessments and other tools to identify needs, risks and level of care. At the request of the Oregon Legislature, ODDS created a single assessment tool for all who receive services to make moves between services easier.

The Employment First team has released a new podcast episode, [Compass Project – Employment/DSA/Transportation Changes](#), to provide more information about these changes for employment, day support activities (DSA) and transportation. Please listen or read the transcript for high-level information about changes as they relate to these topics.

For instance, one thing that has changed for employment services is the terminology. Instead of using terms like “tiers and categories” to identify rates, the new terms are now “service groups” and “payment categories.” The service group, assigned to the person by the Oregon Needs Assessment (ONA), determines the payment category. The payment category is the hourly rate or the payment allowable for services. [This training](#) includes a chart detailing service groups and payment categories (see the chart below).

Adult and Adolescents: Payment Categories Based on Service Groups

Service groups determine payment categories for provider rates for:

- 24-Hour residential programs,
- Host homes
- Day support activities
- Employment path
- Small group employment

Service Groups	Payment Category
1 (Very Low) and 2 (Low)	1
3 (Moderate)	2
4 (High)	3
5 (Very High)	4

When it comes to the exception requests for employment services, the only change to the process is an update of the exception request form. This [training](#) discusses changes to the exception request for employment services.

The new rate model goes into effect July 1, 2022. If it hasn't happened already, the person and the rest of the employment team may want to compare the rate approved in the current exception request to the new rate based on service group and payment category assigned via the current ONA. This is especially true for requests with rates that were approved before April 1, 2022. The current rate should be compared to the new rate that will be effective July 1, 2022 to confirm that the person will continue to receive the same level of support.

If the person and the employment team determine the new rate will not support the person's needs in the employment or day services setting, then an exception request should be submitted before June 15, 2022, to make sure providers continue to receive rates appropriate to the services they are providing.

Please be aware that all exception requests approved before April 1, 2022, will terminate on July 1, 2022, even if the current rate was originally approved beyond July 1.

Here is an example: Cloe has an approved exception request for ongoing job coaching at the old "category 4 or tier 7" rate. Cloe's ONA has assigned her service group 3 (payment category 2 rate). Cloe and the rest of the employment team should review the rate approved in the current exception request with the new rate model (service group 3/payment category 2) to determine if a new exception request will need to be submitted.

I understand this may be confusing, but fortunately there are a lot of resources available to help all of us through this transition. I encourage you to explore these resources, especially the training about the exception request process for employment services:

- [Workday training: Exceptions requests for ODDS employment services](#)
- [Compass Training Website](#)
- [New rate models](#)
- [Service group framework](#)
- [Oregon Needs Assessment](#)
- [Resources for case managers](#)

As always, thank you for everything you do supporting employment services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. And I especially want to thank you for your patience as ODDS moves forward with the initiatives in the Compass Project. When completed, the Compass Project will emphasize person-centered services and make how services are designated, more consistent and transparent throughout Oregon.

Acacia