

November 22, 2019

To: Employment First stakeholders

From: Acacia McGuire Anderson, Statewide Employment First Coordinator

Re: [Employment First](#): Maximizing Hours Policy and Success Story

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

The Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) recently reissued policies concerning maximizing hours.

As a reminder, all individuals who are receiving an employment service through ODDS, or who are interested in working in Competitive Integrated Employment, should have the opportunity to make a decision regarding how many hours they would like to work, in alignment with their goals.



Lisa (left) with job developer Kari Clark. (photo: Cortney Gibson)

In order to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are able to make an employment decision, the Services Coordinator or Personal Agent must have a discussion and engage in service planning with the individuals they work with regarding the hours they would like to work, using the standard of 20 hours per week. It's important to note that 20 hours is just a baseline to have discussion – if the person wants to work 10, 30 or 40 hours, it's ODDS' and VR's job to support that decision.

The updated [ODDS policy and Worker's Guide](#), and the [updated VR policy](#), are both online.

I also wanted to share a story from VR's recent newsletter that showcases what we mean by "maximizing hours." This story is also [available online](#).

Lisa increases her hours, achieves her goals with help of VR

At age 28, Lisa Michie started her first paid community job, and she wanted to start slow.



Lisa (left) with VR counselor Cortney Gibson.

Lisa has seizures and was fearful of what might happen if she had a seizure at work. For many years, that fear kept her from exploring employment, according to her personal agent, Sarah Moore, with Full Access High Desert.

“Lisa was so worried,” Sarah said. “She never knows when she is going to have a seizure, and she was apprehensive because of that. On the other hand, she really wanted to earn money and be out of the house more.”

Lisa was supported in her goals by Cortney Gibson, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor in central Oregon, and job developer Karianne Clark, who owns Central Oregon Employment Solutions. Lisa is married and does housework at home, so she expressed interest in a job that would use her skills of keeping things tidy and organized.

In July 2018, Lisa was hired one day per week to work as an associate at Towne Pump in Prineville. Lisa’s job duties include cleaning the store, stocking, and removing outdated products.

She started at three hours, one day per week.

“This was her first paid community job and we wanted to make sure it was successful and part of that meant starting slow because she was so scared,” Cortney Gibson said. “We wanted to grow her skills and abilities, and that needed to happen on her time, not my time or anyone else’s time.”

After six months, Lisa added a second day to her schedule.

“Deep down inside, I thought I would never have a job because of my problems,” Lisa said. “But this has helped me feel more confident and not let my problems take over me. It’s been a great blessing.”

In June 2019, Lisa talked to Karianne Clark and mentioned she would like to work more hours and days. Karianne talked to management at Towne Pump, but the business didn’t seem to have more hours to offer.

Cortney Gibson reopened Lisa in VR and Karianne quickly secured a second job for Lisa. However, Lisa did not like the lack of social interaction in the new job

and talked to the owner of the Towne Pump again on her own. She told him that she loved working there and would prefer to be there rather than other job.

“She is an amazing person and works really hard,” said Haseeb Shojai, the owner of Towne Pump. “She tries hard to be capable and she has discipline, and that makes it easy to work with her.”

After talking with Lisa, Haseeb decided to double her hours. Lisa now works four days per week at 16 hours total. She went from someone who feared employment to someone who can’t wait to get to work. This is the goal of VR’s approach to maximizing hours: recognizing that the standard for working in competitive integrated employment is 20 hours per week, but also support the person in community employment and achieve their goal for the hours they want to work. This may mean supporting the person to get more hours at their current job, or if that isn’t an option, reopening their VR file as Cortney did to explore other job opportunities.

“I was so excited when I found out I could work four days per week and stay here,” Lisa said. “I love being around the people in the store and I love my coworkers.”

Next up for Lisa: Haseeb said they are training her on the cash register so she can continue to advance in her job.

“I think she can accomplish a lot more,” he said. “She is really smart, a great person and when she isn’t here for a week, we see a huge difference. She is a big part of our work family now.”

Lisa’s employment team includes: Karianne Clark, job developer with Central Oregon Employment Solutions; Veneta Kinley, job coach with Central Oregon Employment Solutions; Service Coordinator Sarah Moore with Full Access High Desert; VR Counselor Cortney Gibson; and Jill Hannemann with Abilitree provided benefits counseling through the Work Incentives Network.