

February 7, 2020

To: Employment First stakeholders

From: Acacia McGuire Anderson, Statewide Employment First Coordinator

Re: [Employment First](#): Transformation Grants Ended

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

In 2014, Employment First funded the first of a series of grants to help providers transform from facility-based services to community-based day and employment services. More than 20 providers received training and technical assistance support in that first round of transformation grants.

Throughout a five-year period, more than 30 providers received training and technical assistance from our two contractors, Living Opportunities and WISE. In December 2019, transformation grants ended. While the desired outcome of transformation is community jobs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, these grants also supported significant organizational change.

Many providers receiving grants altered their services dramatically. This required extensive efforts by everyone involved: structural change that in many cases meant a complete change of vision and way of doing business to focus on competitive integrated employment and supporting people in the most integrated setting possible. Many providers downscaled their facilities, while increasing their staff with new job developers, job coaches and other employment professionals.

In Oregon, these changes mean there are very few sheltered workshops left and we will have complete transformation by September 2020. We have fewer than 300 people in sheltered workshops now, compared to more than 2,800 people in 2013. There was a 77 percent decrease in people being paid subminimum wage since the transformation grants started. In March 2018, more than 1,500 people were working in community employment, up 23 percent from the previous year. These numbers show there is much to celebrate.

Big structural changes are not easy. I want to applaud the effort of those providers that committed to fully embracing change throughout their organization.

Boards of directors, provider agencies and their staff committed to large changes and to transforming their business models. Services Coordinators, Personal Agents, Vocational Rehabilitation counselors and families had to be ready to support this

transformation. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities experienced a large amount of change in a relatively short amount of time, which is not easy.

Hundreds of people got community jobs due to these efforts. We still have hard work ahead of us to continue to support people with I/DD to get integrated jobs and increase their hours and advance in their goals. However, I know a lot of effort went in to get us where we are. Thank you for your efforts and for supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Oregon.

Acacia