

January 24, 2014

To: Employment First stakeholders

From: Statewide Employment First Coordinator Mike Maley

Re: Employment First January Message

Over the past several months there have been questions from state representatives, stakeholders and community partners about Oregon's Employment First initiative and its relationship to the Governor's Executive Order 13-04. To help clarify the differences and facilitate ongoing communications, I thought it might be important to briefly revisit two key documents. The Employment First Policy and the Governor's Executive Order are closely related, but not exactly the same thing.

The Employment First Policy is a statement adopted by the Department of Human Service's Office of Developmental Disability Services (ODDS). In its most basic form, this policy statement says employment in the community in the general workforce is the first and primary option in planning services for working age adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As a policy statement, its utility is to provide the general action framework and expectations in which services are to be planned and delivered. The goal of this policy is that more individuals served through ODDS will obtain and maintain jobs in community settings and as part of the general workforce.

While Oregon was an early adopter (in 2008) of an employment first policy and in starting an employment first initiative, we are not alone in that endeavor. According to the State Employment Leadership Network, 27 states have adopted an official employment first statement of some type. In addition, there are 18 other states that have employment first efforts and initiatives underway, but have not issued an official policy.

Executive Order 13-04, issued in April 2013, is the Governor's specific direction to the Department of Human Services and Department of Education (ODE) to implement the Employment First policy. The Order contains specific strategies, actions, and milestones to be met as a means of furthering the Employment First initiative. Like the

Employment First Policy, the goal of the Executive Order is to increase the number of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities working in community settings. DHS and ODE, as well as many community partners, are working hard to implement the requirements of the Executive Order. For example, we have:

- Formed a statewide Stakeholder Policy Group to make recommendations and review the State's progress under the Order.
- Developed an Outreach and Awareness Plan that will help explain the benefits of employment and address concerns individuals with I/DD or their families have in pursuing community-based employment.
- Developed a Career Development Plan Policy and process. These Plans are to help clearly identify an individual's employment goals and the supports needed to obtain those goals.
- Advanced Data Collection and Reporting efforts so more information is available to monitor progress in making recommendations that further improve services and advance the goals.
- Established core competencies for certain employment service professionals to be used as a basis for the training and qualifications for those positions.

While the list above does not reflect all the work accomplished or performed in implementing the Order, it does represent the accomplishment of the major milestones. But more work will ensue in the coming months and years. In the next 6 months, for example, work will continue in (a) implementing and continually improving the policies and practices outlined above, (b) meeting the Order's specific expectations to be accomplished by July 1, 2014, and (c) using available data and information for strategic planning and recommendations that further the overarching goals.

For reference purposes, the Employment First Policy and Executive Order can be viewed at:

http://www.dhs.state.or.us/dd/supp_emp/docs/policy.pdf

http://www.dhs.state.or.us/dd/supp_emp/docs/Executive-Order-Employment-First.pdf.

In addition, as part of the Executive Order, there was the creation of an Integrated Employment Plan. This Plan is the broad outline of actions to implement the Employment First Policy and the Executive Order. This plan can be viewed at:

http://www.dhs.state.or.us/dd/supp_emp/docs/2013-11-integrated-employment-plan.pdf

I hope this clarification helps answer some of the basic questions about the difference between these two important bodies of work.

Thank you all for your continued involvement, support, and advocacy for services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Oregon. If you have comments or other questions, please email them to employment.first@state.or.us.

~ Mike