

To: Employment First stakeholders
From: Statewide Employment First Coordinator Mike Maley
Re: Employment First and Transition Services

School district success in preparing students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) for integrated employment will greatly help achieve the goals of the Employment First policy. In recognition of that fact, the Governor's Executive Order 13-04 includes specific expectations of the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). Since ODE is a key partner in the Employment First work, I thought I'd take this opportunity to talk specifically about their work in today's message.

Among the expectations for high school transition services, ODE is to:

- Conduct outreach to students, families, and communities;
- Designate staff specialists to work on systems-change efforts;
- Establish a statewide Transition Technical Assistance Network;
- Partner with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to collect and analyze data for the purpose of improving quality, identifying issues regarding the achievement of integrated employment, and making recommendations to state leadership.

While there is still much work to do, ODE has made significant progress. ODE has:

- Entered into a cooperative agreement with the DHS Office of Developmental Disability Services (ODDS) and Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) as well as the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities (OCDD). This agreement can be viewed at:
http://www.dhs.state.or.us/dd/supp_emp/docs/mou.pdf
- Adopted Administrative Rules to facilitate implementation of the Executive Order;
- Initiated the process to select the entity that will be, under contract, implementing the outreach activities;
- Hired a Transition Liaison. This is a newly created position responsible for implementation of the ODE provisions as outlined in the Executive Order;
- Initiated the recruitment and hiring of eight Transition Specialists. Under the supervision of the Transition Liaison, these half-time positions will be located throughout the state and will work with local school districts and community partners in the provision of transition services. These specialists will constitute the Transition Technical Assistance Network.
- Entered into a data sharing agreement with DHS.
- Kept the State Advisory Committee on Special Education (SACSE) informed of activities related to implementation of the Executive Order.

ODE and, by extension, the 197 local school districts in Oregon, have a critical role in implementing the Employment First policy and Executive Order. One goal of ODE and local school districts is to prepare students with I/DD to be able to achieve the goal of integrated employment. This will help facilitate employment success as these individuals transition into the adult system. This also will require close cooperation and collaboration with ODDS and VR. Secondly, ODE and local schools, in partnership with DHS, can work to create an expectation among younger students with I/DD and their families that integrated employment can be a part of their future. This will help to improve transition services by ensuring that students and their families are fully informed of all their options, including post-secondary education and employment.

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