

## Employment First: FAQ of the Month

**To: Employment First stakeholders**

**From: Statewide Employment First Coordinator Mike Maley**

**Re: FAQ of the Month: Employment in Rural Areas**

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

Every month, we will publish answers to Frequently Asked Questions in the **F.A.Q. of the Month**. These provide good discussion topics and can help to provide guidance on some of the work going forward as we implement the Governor's Executive Order 13-04 and the Employment First Integrated Work Plan. To submit a question for the FAQ of the Month, email [employment.first@state.or.us](mailto:employment.first@state.or.us).

**Question: "How can small and rural communities have employment opportunities?"**

**Answer:** This is an important topic since the Employment First Initiative is intended to create opportunity for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) wherever they live. This is a concern for all job seekers in rural areas. According to the Oregon Employment Department, the overall unemployment rate in 2013 for metro areas was 7.4 percent compared to 9.4 percent for non-metro area.

While living in small or rural communities creates some unique challenges, fortunately there are strategies that are effective in creating employment opportunities for people with I/DD. In fact there are emerging and expanding resources to help address the challenges. For example, the University of Montana has a Rural Institute on Disabilities. This institute has generated materials and trainings specific to the goal of providing employment opportunities for people with I/DD, including people with significant disabilities, living in small and rural communities. In Oregon, we are incorporating these existing materials into our training and technical assistance efforts. In January, a [webinar](#) was held on rural job development for providers and job developers. The purpose of this webinar was to "share strategies used to create employment for youth and adults in small rural communities including leveraging social and economic capital, self-employment, resource ownership, and customized employment strategies."

In addition to addressing the topic of employment in rural areas in our training and technical efforts, we are implementing other strategies to help address the need. Specifically, DHS is engaged in efforts to expand the capacity and availability of key services such as job development, job coaching, person centered approaches to planning, etc. The goal is to increase availability of these services to all areas of the state. And we will continue to coordinate these efforts among stakeholders, the Stakeholder Policy Group, and between the Department of Human Service and Department of Education.

For those interested in the topic of employment in rural areas, below are a couple of resources that might be helpful. One is a presentation by the Montana Rural Institute on Disabilities on employment in rural areas: [http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/Handouts/work\\_experiences\\_rural.pdf](http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/Handouts/work_experiences_rural.pdf)  
The second is a presentation on the topic that was presented at a conference in Oregon in May of 2013.

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](mailto:employment.first@state.or.us).

~ Mike