

9-23-16

**To: Employment First stakeholders**

**From: Acacia McGuire Anderson, Statewide Employment First Coordinator**

**Re: [Employment First](#): Q&A with MV Advancements**

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

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As part of our series of messages discussing how organizational transformation works, we will be featuring messages from some of the provider organizations who received transformation grants in the first phase that started in 2015. Many of these providers are in the process of fully transforming from facility-based sheltered workshops to community-based employment service providers.

This month we have a Question and Answer with Marie Gwilliam, manager of the employment division for MV Advancements' Yamhill County office. MV Advancements has received training and technical assistance from WISE (Washington Initiative for Supported Employment), one of two T/TA providers on the transformation project. Marie agreed to answer questions about some of the challenges and opportunities that transformation has brought her organization. [MV Advancements](#) operates offices in Yamhill and Polk counties. Answers have been edited for clarity and length.

**Question:** Tell us a bit about MV Advancements' history.

**MV Advancements:** MV Advancements (MVA) was founded in 1966 as Mid-Valley Workshop. The initial focus was to provide employment opportunities for adults experiencing developmental disabilities. Over the years, services expanded to include residential and community inclusion (day services) support. MVA has been working with people interested in integrated community employment since the early 1980s and currently supports more than 70 men and women in individual placements. MVA also offers small group employment as well as employment path opportunities and operates an ice cream shop in downtown McMinnville.

**Question:** Tell us about the high-level, major changes that MV Advancements has made since receiving a transformation grant from DHS.

**MV Advancements:** We rebranded from Mid-Valley Rehabilitation, Inc. to MV Advancements in July 2015. We hired a new Executive Director, Kathy Schlotfeldt. We created an Employment Director position, filled by Michael Schmidt. We hired a new manager for Yamhill County Individual Placements (IP) department. We have had growth of the individual placement teams in Yamhill, Marion and Polk counties. We have trained

and mentored employment specialists to reduce start-up time when onboarding new employees.

**Question:** Can you address the hurdles and opportunities that came with getting your board of directors to accept and/or embrace organizational transformation?

**MV Advancements:** Transformation involved a culture shift and an understanding of the need to evolve. Our board of directors was especially concerned about losing employment opportunities that had been created through the years in a facility-based setting. Employment for individuals experiencing disabilities has always been the company's priority, but understanding and embracing the change to integrated community employment has taken time. Seeing the success and the life changes for those individuals who have moved from facility-based employment to community employment has helped the board to understand the need for change. With the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) changes, we understand that this is a national movement. Our desire is to continue to be leaders in employment for individuals with disabilities and to honor our mission of assisting persons with disabilities to develop to their highest potential and achieve fulfilling lives.

**Question:** What kind of staff training has been done to support community employment?

**MV Advancements:** All Employment Specialists are required to take the Oregon Employment Learning Network (OELN) courses on Systematic Instruction, Job Development and Marketing strategies, Social Security and Benefits planning and Discovery. Debra McClean has given us specialized training on job coaching strategies, rural job development and bridging the gap to Discovery. We also developed, with assistance from AtWork!, an internal training manual for employment professionals to quickly develop skills to reduce the time from hiring to job productivity.

**Question:** What other changes have you made to support community employment efforts?

**MV Advancements:** We have become more connected in the community and have presented at local service clubs in Yamhill and Polk counties. We have created employment brochures and updated our website. We have invested in new technology to create a more efficient and mobile workforce in the Individual Placement department. We are also developing internal expertise on assistive technology, which will be important as we place individuals with more barriers to employment in community jobs.

If you have comments or other questions, please email them to [employment.first@state.or.us](mailto:employment.first@state.or.us)

~ Acacia