

10-2-15

To: Employment First stakeholders

From: Mike Maley, Statewide Employment First Coordinator

Re: Employment First Question of the Month: Future of sheltered workshops

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

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We will regularly publish answers to an **Employment Question of the Month**. These provide good discussion topics and help provide guidance on the work going forward as we implement the Governor's Executive Order 15-01 and the Employment First Integrated Employment Plan.

Question: "What is the future of sheltered workshop services in Oregon?"

Answer: I understand that many individuals, families and providers are concerned about the future of sheltered workshop services. There will be a gradual reduction of use of sheltered workshop services over time and an increase in integrated and community-based services.

This message will outline some of the reasons for this.

The proposed settlement of the Lane vs. Brown case calls for the reduction of services in sheltered workshops and the addition of integrated community jobs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. However, the settlement is only one factor affecting the long-term status of sheltered workshops. Other factors such as Oregon's Employment First policy and new or redefined federal policies also significantly affect sheltered workshops.

The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), which helps fund Oregon's services, adopted a rule in 2014 that requires all Medicaid-funded Home and Community Based Settings services (like employment services) be provided in an integrated setting. Sheltered workshops are not integrated settings. There is a timeline for when all CMS-funded services, including employment services, must meet the standard of integration or states will no longer receive federal funding to support these services. The details of Oregon's plan to comply are at:

<http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/seniors-disabilities/HCBS/Pages/Transition-Plan.aspx>

CMS also has made it clear that, in order to receive federal funding, employment services such as those received in sheltered workshops must help people get

integrated community jobs and must be “time-limited.” This means that these services are to be provided over a defined period of time and must have the ultimate goal of helping people enter the general workforce.

In addition, Congress passed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to prioritize employment services and supports to help people find jobs in the most integrated settings. This law affects services provided by schools, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Office of Developmental Disability Services.

All these factors lead to a future built on integrated, community-based employment. So the next question is: what is the state doing to help providers and individuals?

First, DHS offers many employment services to help people who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities find, keep and advance in community jobs. Details on those services are available at:

<http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/employment/employment-first/Pages/supported-employment.aspx>

Second, the state is working to help providers transform their services and help increase capacity through its [Provider Transformation Project](#) described in previous messages.

Finally, I realize that often when people say they are concerned about the future of sheltered workshops, they are worried about other issues embedded within that question. Some of the concerns we often hear include:

- Can everyone with I/DD, including those with significant disabilities, work in the community?
- What about choice? What if people don't want community jobs?
- Will integration lead to social isolation?
- If there are no sheltered workshops, will people sit at home? Since many people with I/DD live with family members, will this disrupt the life/work routines of others in the household?
- How will the state address new service capacity needs?
- How will the state address rural needs and concerns?

Future messages from Employment First will address these concerns and questions in more detail.

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