

1-19-18

**To: Employment First stakeholders**

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

**Re: Employment First: 2018 Statewide Transition Conference**

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

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The [Oregon Statewide Transition Conference](#) will be held March 1-2 in Portland. The event provides attendees an opportunity to learn, network, and share innovative approaches regarding transition practices in Oregon.



Keynote speaker Felicia Echeverria from Alternative Work Concepts

The conference is a collaborative effort between the Oregon Association of Vocational Support Needs Personnel (OAVSNP), the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), the Oregon Youth Transition Program (YTP), Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). Last year the conference drew more than 600 attendees from Education, VR, ODDS and employment providers. A photo slideshow from last year's conference is online at: <https://flic.kr/s/aHskSajjwK>

There are three topical strands at the conference: Education, Employment and Independent Living. Topical strands follow the process to build a successful plan for students' post-secondary goals.

Session highlights include: Accessing post-secondary education for students with disabilities; pre-employment transition services; ethical considerations when working with transition-age students; and a series of sessions from ODDS regarding accessing and support students who are receiving ODDS/Brokerage supports.

Sarah Drinkwater, assistant superintendent of ODE's Office of Student Services, will open the event on March 1. The keynote speakers that day are Jacque Gerdes and Felicia Echeverria with Alternative Work Concepts. Gerdes is assistant executive director at Eugene-based Alternative Work Concepts. Echeverria works for Alternative Work Concepts as a transit host/travel trainer at Lane Transit

District in Eugene. Echeverria assists people with disabilities to navigate the transit system. She also co-teaches sensitivity trainings for bus and taxi drivers.

At 6 p.m. Thursday, March 1, there will be an awards banquet to recognize and celebrate leaders in the transition services field. New this year is the “[I Work We Succeed](#)” Employment First Award, which recognizes a provider, agency, Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, educator, service coordinator or personal agent who has gone above and beyond to provide community employment services to transition-age youth or people in sheltered workshops.



Photo of Harper's Playground. Photo contributed.

There will also be recognition of student accomplishments at the banquet.

On March 2, the keynote speaker is G Cody QJ Goldberg. Goldberg is executive director of [Harper's Playground](#), an inclusive playground at Arbor Lodge Park in Portland. The organization's mission is to “inspire vital communities by creating innovative playgrounds for people of all abilities.” Goldberg believes that the power of a well-designed and realized inclusive play space can transform a

community for the better.

Information, including links to register, is available at: <http://www.oregonstc.org/>

The event is at the Marriot Portland Downtown Waterfront hotel.

~ Acacia