

■ **Aug. 28, 2015**

To: Employment First Stakeholders

From: Mike Maley, Statewide Employment First Coordinator

Re: VR In-Service

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

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VR holds annual in-service

Vocational Rehabilitation held its annual in-service event on Aug. 12-13 at the Salem Convention Center. The theme was “Collaborating and Communicating to Improve Employment Outcomes.” The theme reflects the major initiatives VR is directly involved in that are driving change in how they serve people, not only in VR but with its partners including Employment First, the Office of Developmental Disability Services (ODDS), the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and workforce systems.

Employment First policies and philosophies were embedded throughout the in-service. The event was divided into two tracks: youth transition and collaboration. More than 340 participants attended and spent one day on each track. Keith Ozols, VR’s Statewide Coordinator of the Youth Transition Program (YTP), said the theme of the in-service this year was to show how to capitalize on collaboration. “We really focused on how we are breaking down the silos agencies and working together to improve employment outcomes,” he said.

The first track focused on youth transition. The panel in the first session of this track discussed changes related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the 2015 Executive Order 15-01 and new Medicaid Waiver employment services. Presenters included Ozols with VR, along with Mitch Kruska from ODE and Acacia McGuire Anderson, field services manager with ODDS.



DHS Imaging and Records Management Services (IRMS) was one of 10 employers recognized at the VR InService event Aug. 12-13.

Photo: Contributed

During this two-hour session, the eight Transition Network Facilitators led the group in regional discussions around what is working in the system, what areas need help, and goals for the coming year.

“On the positive side, we are seeing a lot more collaboration,” Ozols said. “We heard from VR counselors that they are working much more closely with service coordinators, personal agents and educators. More people are coming to the table.”

About 10 employers and staff members received awards during lunch both days. The Department of Human Services’ Imaging and Records Management Services (IRMS) was one of the employers recognized for its recent hiring of several people who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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.

