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## Employment First: Outcomes and Successes

When people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) work in their communities, everyone succeeds. With the right job and supports, everyone can work.

Oregon’s Employment First policy was crafted with stakeholders and advocates in 2008. The policy states that community jobs are the first priority in planning employment services for working-age adults and youth who experience I/DD.



*Kevin works full-time as an office assistant at the DHS’ Human Resources’ Shared Services team. Kevin, who experiences cerebral palsy, was hired by DHS in May 2015 through Employment First efforts to encourage state agencies to hire more people with I/DD.*

Oregon’s Employment First initiative is a collaboration between the Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), along with stakeholders and local teams.

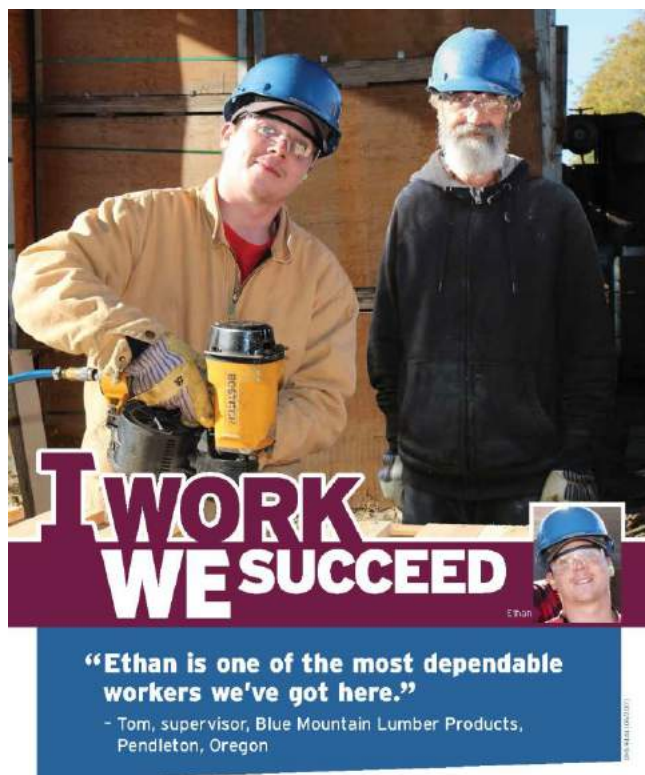
### Background

[People with I/DD](#) who work in the community have more choice and control over their lives. Working increases financial independence, build skills, and helps people connect with the community.

Businesses say that having employees with disabilities improves the workplace. [Employers say](#) that people with I/DD are some of their most committed employees.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, businesses that employ people with disabilities turn social issues into business opportunities. “These opportunities translate into lower costs, higher revenues and increased profits. Employees with disabilities bring unique experiences and understanding that transform a

workplace and enhance products and services.” When an individual with a disability works in the community, everyone succeeds.



Promoting community jobs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities  
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Read more about Ethan's success story.



Ethan works more than 20 hours per week at Blue Mountain Lumber in Pendleton. Ethan previously worked in a sheltered workshop making far below minimum wage.

**About this document:** This report will highlight some of the outcomes and successes achieved toward the goal of increasing community jobs for people with I/DD. All the numbers included in this report are from the upcoming Fall 2017 Employment First Data Report and other reports on ODDS clients for State Fiscal Year 2017 (July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017).

Employment First’s website has an Employer section with resources. The [webpage](#) also features video testimonials from Oregon businesses discussing their experiences employing a person with a disability.

“It’s really important that we champion the idea that it’s possible to find work for individuals with cognitive disabilities and that really, we are improved by it.” – *Janeen Reding, Vice President of Human Resources at St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton.*

**Required by federal policies:** Medicaid requires services to be integrated in the community through its [Home and Community Based Services](#). The U.S. Department of Justice issued guidance that the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) applies to employment and day services. The federal [Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act](#) (WIOA) places priority on integrated employment for people with disabilities accessing services through VR.

The [Lane v. Brown](#) federal settlement also has specific requirements that Oregon must decrease the number of people in sheltered

workshops and increase the number of people in community employment.

## Vocational Rehabilitation



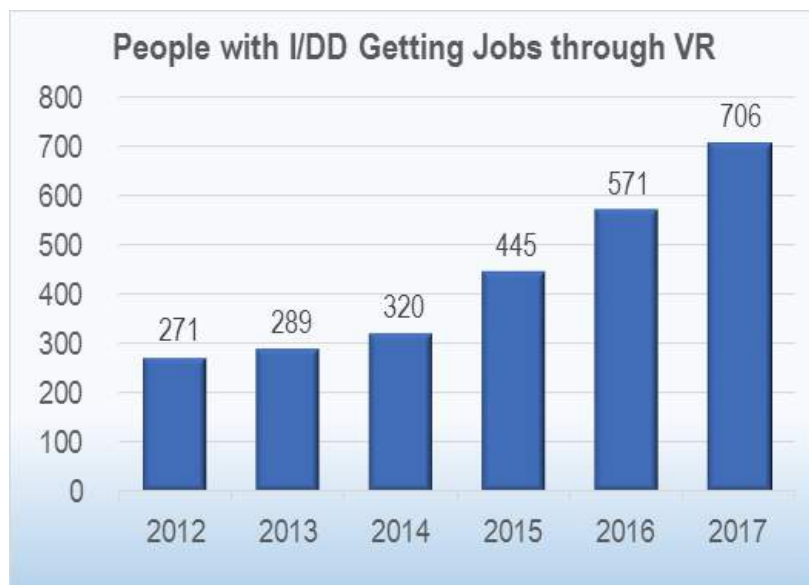
*One of the largest medical centers in Eastern Oregon, St. Anthony Hospital employs several individuals with disabilities in different areas of the hospital. Chelsea works in environmental services while Jonathan (left, pictured) was promoted and now works full-time in the hospital's café. St. Anthony Hospital worked closely with provider Trendsitions and VR counselor Diane Ashley to make sure the employees in DD services have the tools to be successful on the job.*

When people with I/DD are seeking work, they often start by going to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). A VR counselor helps a person find a good job fit by doing an assessment and writing a plan for the person. The person and their team, including the VR counselor, chooses a job developer who works with the person to go out in the community and find a good job match.

For several years in a row, VR has increased the number of people with I/DD getting community jobs.

More than 700 people with I/DD got jobs in the

community, a 24 percent increase from the previous year.



VR continues to make good progress helping people with I/DD get and maintain community jobs.

To learn more, go to the ODDS [fact sheet](#) and [video](#) that tells more about how job development works.



## ODDS Outcomes

Sometimes when a person with I/DD starts a new community job, they might need help from someone called a job coach. A job coach is someone who supports the person at his or her job. This might include things like creating visual aids or work checklists, or making sure the person knows how to check in with their supervisor and interact with coworkers. It might also include taking extra time with the person to make sure they understand the job and the tasks that they are expected to do.



*A job coach can be a great help to someone with significant support needs on the job. Debbie (right) with Pathway Enterprises supports Logan, who works 30 hours per week in the community at AlSCO in Medford.*

When someone is working with the help of a job coach, this is called Supported Employment. According to data from ODDS, 1,111 people were working in community jobs with supports in March 2017. This is a 32 percent increase from 841 people the previous year.

Of the 1,111 people working in community jobs with supports, 264 people worked 20 hours or more. This is a 46 percent increase from the previous year. On average, people working in jobs with supports are making \$10.12 per hour.

Job coaching is meant to be a service that eventually goes away as a person feels more comfortable and knows their job. However, some people may have more significant support needs and sometimes they need job coaching for more time.

Many people are able to do their job independently, and ask their coworker or supervisor for help when needed. Everyone has questions or needs assistance from their coworkers at times, and people with disabilities are no different.

To learn more, go to the ODDS [fact sheet](#) and [video](#) that tells more about how job coaching works.

## Community Inclusion



Kirstin worked for her entire adult life at Goodwill Industries of the Columbia Willamette until 2016, when she got her first community job at Kyra's Bake Shop in Lake Oswego. Kirstin loves her job: "I like being in the community; it's more fun."

For several years now, Employment First has reported [success stories](#) featuring Oregonians with I/DD working in the community. Some of these people were told in the past that they could not work successfully in community jobs or have lives like anyone else. [Vivian in Hermiston](#) said she was told as a child she would never have her own family, or work in a job of her choice. Today, Vivian is married with children, has her own home, and a job she loves at Desert Lanes Family Fun Center. When given the opportunity and with the right job match and supports, many people with

significant disabilities are thriving and living full lives in the community.



As Oregon moves in the direction of full community inclusion, there has been an emphasis on moving away from "sheltered workshops," or facilities where people work mainly with other people with disabilities, often making less than minimum wage. Oregon's federal settlement agreement requires a decrease in the number of people in sheltered workshops. In addition, many advocates, families and individuals believe that people with disabilities are healthiest and happiest

when they are fully integrated into their communities.

There were 1,043 people in sheltered workshops in March 2017, a decrease of 26 percent from the previous year (362 fewer people) compared to March 2016.

## Transition-Age



*Karisue started working as an intern at Gresham Heights Learning Center while she was attending the transition program at Centennial Transition Center. She now works 20 hours per week as a preschool assistant at Gresham Heights Learning Center. I've always loved kids," Karisue said. "When I see a baby, I know I can make them smile. And that's how I knew what I wanted to do."*

Young people are more likely to find a job as an adult if they have work experiences while in school. More young people with I/DD are getting the chance to experience working in the community while they are in high school. In Oregon, many young people enter what are called “transition programs,” or programs designed to help a person transition from school to the adult workforce. These programs help with life skills such as grocery shopping, meal planning and budgeting, but also include community work experiences. Transition teachers work closely with students to find community

work experiences that fit the person’s passions, skills and interests.

Oregon also has the [Youth Transition Program](#) (YTP), which serves thousands of youth with disabilities (not just those who experience I/DD) in 115 school districts in Oregon. YTP helps prepare students for a community job after school, or for college or another technical program.

In Oregon, 255 transition-age students with I/DD got a job through VR in 2017,

The Oregon Department of Education has a [Transition Technical Assistance Network](#), which includes 11 Transition Network Facilitators, who help school districts throughout the state with outreach, training, and other supports to help students with disabilities and their teachers.



## What's Next?



There is a tremendous amount of momentum as more Oregonians experience the contributions that people with disabilities bring to the workforce. Several large employers have started initiatives to hire more people with disabilities in the workforce.

For instance, OHSU established a Community Advisory Council for Recruitment and Retention of People with Disabilities to increase the representation of people with disabilities in OHSU's workforce. The OHSU Job Carving Program was the first project of this advisory group. OHSU hired six Support Services Aides as part of the

*Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) has launched a Job Carving Program to increase the representation of people with disabilities in OHSU's workforce. Paul is one of six new employees with disabilities hired as part of this program. Paul works 16 hours per week as a Support Services Aide in the OHSU Environmental Services department. OHSU plans to expand the program to include more positions in other areas of the hospital.*

initial phase of the program in 2016. The plan is to promote many of those employees into full-time positions and fill the existing Support Services Aides positions with new hires who experience a disability.

Through its Community Advisory Council for Recruitment and Retention of People with Disabilities, OHSU is encouraging other large employers in the Portland metro area to start similar programs to hire people with disabilities.

In addition to employer-led hiring initiatives, there are also other programs aimed at connecting employers with employees with I/DD. Project SEARCH is a 9-month internship training program for people with I/DD. In Oregon, there are three sites funded by DHS: Albertina Kerr leads a program at [Kaiser Permanente Sunnyside Medical Center](#), provider Pearl Buck leads a site at [PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend](#) in Springfield, and Community Access Services is starting a program with the city of Portland in the fall 2017.



*Austin Harris graduated from Albertina Kerr's Project SEARCH site at Kaiser Permanente Westside Medical Center in 2016. He now works full-time at the Intel campus in Hillsboro.*

In addition, [Albertina Kerr](#) coordinates a site at the [Embassy Suites by Hilton Portland Airport](#) location in partnership with Multnomah County and at [Kaiser Permanente Westside Medical Center](#) in partnership with Washington County. [Pearl Buck](#) is launching a second site with PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at its university district location in the fall 2017.

DHS continues to assist providers with funds and training to transform to community-based services. DHS also has launched grants for local communities to spearhead innovative projects to increase capacity for employment services.

The Employment First Outcomes and Successes report is available online with links accessible at the Employment First website under "Documents and Publications" at: <http://iworkwesucceed.org>