

GOVERNOR'S COMMITTEE ON DISABILITY ISSUES & EMPLOYMENT

GOLDENDALE TOWN HALL MEETING & LEADERSHIP BREAKFAST May 14 & 15, 2009

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

Introduction:

The Community Outreach Subcommittee of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE) met in Goldendale on May 14th & 15th, 2009. The Town Hall Meeting and the Leadership Breakfast was held at the Goldendale Community Library. Over forty-five citizens, service providers and local officials participated. The following report represents a summary of issues and suggested action steps discussed. Your information is very valuable to us in planning for subsequent Outreaches. We look forward to further communications on these issues and hearing about your local success stories.

Accessibility

Participant Comments:

- Many buildings including schools are not easily accessible due to lack of automatic door opening devices. (Note: ADA only requires that the opening door pressure be regulated and does not require automatic door opening devices).
- Some local restaurants have fixed table placements that are not accessible.
- The local post office has a ramp but the doors are difficult to open.
- Many local businesses are accessible but lack signage to direct customers to the accessible entrance.

Action Items:

You can get free information on access standards from the Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center, (DBTAC) their toll-free number is 1.800.949.4232. You can also contact the Washington State Building Code Council; their number is 360.725.2967 or email them at sbcc@cted.wa.gov.

Division of Developmental Disabilities Services:

Participant Comments:

- The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) does not have an office in Goldendale nor do they provide itinerant services. A number of persons with disabilities live in the Goldendale area.
- Goldendale is the county seat for Klickitat County and it is the only county in Washington State that doesn't have a DD Coordinator. Local citizens have expressed concerns and advocated for the creation of a DD Coordinator but there seems to be little interest.
- Dental Services in Goldendale are willing to take patients with developmental disabilities if they are a long time resident of the area.
- DDD does not work closely with Children's services in Goldendale

Program Update: In order to better serve customers in Goldendale and Yakima, DDD has added more case managers. They also developed an intake process that can be done over the phone or by email. The Regional office has discussed having a case manager work out of the DSHS office in Goldendale twice a month but nothing has been implemented.

Action Items:

- ❖ It was strongly recommended that parents and consumers need to continue to advocate to the DDD Region 2 Office requesting that Goldendale have local access to case managers
- ❖ People need to work together to develop a local ARC in Goldendale.

Emergency Planning

Steve Brown, the Emergency Management Coordinator, stated that general disability response to a disaster would be referred to the Red Cross for evacuation services. The Red Cross is responsible for shelters and Goldendale shelters are accessible. He spoke of the Five (5) P's - **persons, provisions, prescriptions, possessions, & pets** and the 72 hour rule for emergency planning. The County's Emergency Plan was recently adopted and needs signatures of all cities in the county. The plan is posted on the internet (www.klickitatcounty.org/EmergencyMan/) if citizens want to read it. Plans to improve the mountain top communications radio services are being developed. The improvements will increase the availability of communications during a disaster. The reverse 911 system should be activated in the next couple of months. It utilizes a wide variety of options to reach the public such as email, text messaging, cell phones, & land lines. Mr. Brown encouraged people to call the sheriff's office to self identify any special needs for themselves or their families.

- The Department of Transportation provides emergency planning services and has developed a Memorandum of Understanding with local transportation providers across the state.

Action Items:

- ❖ Mt. Adams Transportation Services would like to be included in the county's emergency planning process.

Foster Care

Participant Comments:

- Behavioral support services, respite and foster care for children with disabilities are not available in the local area.
- The lack of group homes and foster care providers means that individuals with disabilities are in placements hundreds of miles from family and friends.

Housing

Participant Comments:

- Rental units are hard to find and if available are often in sub standard condition.
- Some rental units have severe mold and mushrooms growing inside.

Action Items:

- ❖ Participants suggested that county commissioners and/or city council members should host a town hall meeting to discuss issues surrounding rental property and low cost housing for people in Goldendale.
- ❖ Community Development Block Grant funds can be used for housing.
- ❖ Citizens need to explore if the federal stimulus funds can be used for the development of rental property and low cost housing.

Mental Health Services

Participant Comments:

- Mental Health counseling and case management services are available in Goldendale.
- People with disabilities who are not employed or involved in some type of day program are often depressed which can escalate social and family conflicts.
- Mental health counselors work with families to develop emergency preparedness plans.
- The nearest psychiatric bed is in Yakima.
- A representative of New Hope Farms was very pleased with the services provided to their residence by Central WA Comprehensive Mental Health.

New Hope Farms

- On June 13th, New Hope Farms will celebrate its 31st anniversary.
- The oldest resident is 81 years old.
- The youngest is 19 years old and attends Goldendale High School.
- Residents receive life skills training.
- Currently they have 20 residents and have 5 openings available.

- They also provide services to medically fragile individuals but are not able to offer 24-hour nursing services.
- They receive state funding along with private donations. They have an Endowment Fund and to learn more about their program or how to make a donation you can call 509.773.3939.
- They have a day program that costs only \$15.00 per day.

Parent to Parent

Participant Comments:

- There is a need for an organized support system for parents of children with disabilities.
- Head Start offers a support program that reaches younger families but struggles to attract parents of young adults with disabilities to join in their activities
- Goldendale needs to have a local ARC.

Respite Services

Participant Comments:

- Homecare providers who have expertise in behavioral supports are not available in Goldendale.
- It is difficult to find qualified respite workers who are willing to work for \$10.00 an hour.
- New Hope Farms provides an Adult Day Program for a fee of \$15.00 per day.

Action Items:

- ❖ A participant strongly recommended that parents and guardians write directly to the Governor requesting her support. They further explained that writing the Governor will trigger a fast response

Special Education:

Participant Comments:

- A Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) needs to be established to help the many families who have children with disabilities in Goldendale.
- Families have been told that they must have a qualifying child enrolled in school to create and participate in a SEPAC.
- Physical therapy services are not available at the schools. The school district contacts with the local hospital to provide physical therapy services and families are authorized for 12 visits per year.
- Occupational Therapy is provided to qualifying students weekly. One parent expressed concerns about the quality of the sessions.
- The School District lost seven (7) para-teachers due to budget reductions.
- Students with disabilities do not have access to life skills classes.

- A Parent asked about school to work transition services in Goldendale and the DVR representative announced that there is going to be a meeting next week with seniors and their parents.
- Parents wondered why other transition age students were not included in the meeting.
- One parent shared her satisfaction with the services provided by PAVE who assisted with the development of her child's IEP. She highly recommended families contact PAVE if they have concerns about their child's education.
- PAVE, a non-profit organization, exists to share information and resources with people whose lives are linked to children and adults with disabilities. Washington PAVE | 6316 So. 12th St. | Tacoma, WA 98465, (253) 565-2266 (v/tty) | 1-800-5-PARENT (v/tty) | Fax: (253) 566-8052 , E-mail:wapave9@washingtonpave.com

Action Items:

- ❖ An elementary counselor who is new to community recommended that parents and the community at large support the levy funding, it is what funds her position and it will be the only way to bring back the para-teachers.
- ❖ The DVR representative was asked to contact the School Board Chairperson in Goldendale to discuss the school to work transition services available through DVR.
- ❖ Plan To Work can assist students who receive Social Security disability benefits and explain the work incentives available to students. Call 1- 866) 497-9433 (voice) or (877) 846-0775 (TTY) to speak with a qualified benefits planner.

Transportation

Participant Comments:

- Transportation services are currently provided by Mt. Adams Transportation.
- Riders must call 24 hours in advance to reserve their trip, but operators try to work riders in for same day service as space and time allows.
- Medicaid transportation will take riders to appointments as far away as Seattle, Spokane and Hood River.
- Medicaid transportation is often provided by volunteer drivers, without them it would be very difficult to meet the local need.
- There is a fee to ride Mt. Adams transportation except for riders who are over 60 years of age.
- Mt. Adams does not provide daily employment trips due to funding limitations.
- Goldendale lost their Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) grant funding from the Washington State Department of Transportation.
- Transportation to neighboring communities which have greater job opportunities is non-existing.
- Native American communities have become more active in the transportation business and may be a good partner for Goldendale.
- The Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) is a partnership of members from the Legislature, state agencies, transportation providers, and consumer advocates working to remove transportation as a barrier to full

- participation in the community. ACCT maybe a grant funding source to improve transportation services between county and city boundaries.
- The People for People transportation program does not serve Goldendale.
 - There is a new Gorge transportation link that is looking at developing a transportation loop between Hood River and Goldendale.
 - Mason County Transit uses school buses, after school hours, to expand their rider capacity and bus routes.
 - Providing transportation services has become very difficult in rural areas. Greyhound has pulled out of a lot of rural areas. Connecting routes such as the Grapeline, Apple Line and Dungeness Line were created to fill the transportation gap between communities and transportation hubs.
 - Several Goldendale residence travel outside the area to Hood River or Sunnyside to access dialysis.
 - A Dialysis firm is looking at the possibility of opening a lab in Goldendale. They are conducting a certification process to establish the number of users to ascertain if the lab will be cost effective.

Action Items:

- ❖ Local transportation providers were asked to hold a meeting to start the discussion of how they can partner to expand transportation options.
- ❖ A meeting should be organized with local transportation providers with the transportation planners in Hood River who are working on developing a transportation loop to include Goldendale.

In Conclusion:

The Governor's Committee on Disability Issues' Community Outreach Subcommittee members were warmly welcomed by persons of disabilities, family members, service providers and local decision makers. We appreciate and value the input and candor of all of the participants. The information gathered will be shared with your local elected officials and with the entire membership of GCDE. We look forward to further communications on these issues and hearing about your local success stories.

Thank you again for your attendance and participation. If you have any questions please call Melinda Johnson, staff at 509.532.3148.