

Director's Message

July 25, 2022

Celebrating a major achievement for Oregonians with disabilities

Last week, the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) and our partners in the disabilities community reached a significant milestone. A federal judge found Oregon in substantial compliance with the Lane v. Brown settlement agreement, which was aimed at better supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in community employment.

The Lane v. Brown lawsuit was filed in federal court in 2012, claiming that Oregon violated the law by segregating people with I/DD in sheltered workshops. These workplaces often paid less than minimum wage. The plaintiffs also claimed the state denied supported employment services that would allow people with I/DD the opportunity to work alongside people without disabilities in the community. In 2016, the court approved the Lane v. Brown settlement, which outlined the work to be done.

Since then, Oregon has transformed employment services for people with I/DD, including fostering a culture shift with more employers throughout the state recognizing the value of this population in the workforce. This work has been led by the ODDS Employment First program, and Vocational Rehabilitation in partnership with the Oregon Department of Education.

By September 2020, all ODDS-funded sheltered workshop services in Oregon were closed. More than 1,500 people with I/DD were in community employment in 2021, compared with only 143 people in 2016.

Another outcome has been creation of the [Impact Oregon](#) job board website. This website was built during the pandemic to help increase services capacity by helping people find careers in Oregon's developmental disabilities services.

This is a tremendous achievement that is improving the lives of Oregonians with I/DD. I am so grateful to our staff in Employment First, ODDS, VR and their partners

at the Oregon Department of Education and in the community. Oregon businesses were also instrumental in the work, partnering with us to provide meaningful and fulfilling career opportunities to people with disabilities. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this amazing accomplishment.

While this achievement is cause for celebration, our work in service to Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities is far from over. Much more needs to be done to overcome the stigma and bias toward people with disabilities. We will continue to work with disability advocates, those with lived experience, and system partners toward a future of inclusion and belonging regardless of differences.

You can read more about the case through the links below:

- [Message about Thursday's hearing from ODDS, VR and DOE leadership](#) (July 22, 2022)
- [Final Lane v. Brown report to the court](#) (June 2022)
- [Lane v. Brown settlement agreement report](#) (January 2022)
- [Lane v. Brown data report](#) (June 2022)
- [The full Lane v. Brown settlement agreement](#) (2016)
- Success stories featured on the [Employment First Facebook page](#)

Fariborz Pakseresht, Director, ODHS