

# Community Listening: Diversity & Disability

OHSU University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

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## Why Community Listening?

The University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) at Oregon Health & Science University, as a member of PODD\*, in partnership with three Regional Health Equity Coalitions (RHEC) conducted three listening sessions in various regions in rural Oregon during the month of June.

The intent of the Listening Sessions was to provide PODD's agencies' representatives the opportunity to make meaningful connections and build relationships with diverse populations (Latino and Native American) in rural communities in Oregon. The sessions were not intended for PODD members to offer fixes, suggestions or advice.

The Sessions provided PODD members with an increased understanding of diverse populations' and what is/are:

- their perspective on disability,
- culturally relevant and important to them,
- the strengths of their communities,
- their community's gaps or barriers,
- their perspectives on how agencies can be more welcoming and responsive,
- ways agencies can better partner and support diverse communities.

\*Partners in Oregon on Diversity and Disability (PODD), serves all of Oregon, and includes Oregon's two University Centers on Excellence and Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs), Disability Rights Oregon, and the Oregon Developmental Disabilities Council.

## Listening in Hood River

The third of the three Listening Sessions took place in Hood River. There were approximately 30 attendees who joined together to discuss disability and culture in their community. Dinner, interpreters and child care were provided and community members were asked to participate in both facilitated large group and small group discussions. The evening began with attendees being invited to share their opinions about their community's top three strengths and top three challenges via the "Strengths and Challenges Posting Activity".

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*"Listening Sessions provide opportunities to learn from, and build trust with, a community."*

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## Hood River Strengths and Challenges

### Results: Strengths and Challenges Posting Activity

*“As a community, we need education about what it means to have a disability in the US as compared to the countries we come from, where there is a lot of fear and misunderstanding around disability.”*

Topic	Community Strengths	Community Challenges
Healthcare	9	0
Family Support	4	5
Employment	1	3
Education	3	10
Faith/Church	8	0
Housing	2	4
Recreation	4	5
Social Activities	1	6
Transportation	4	2
Accessibility/ADA	1	2
Community Support	2	6


The results showed that attendees felt their community's


Top 3 strengths were:

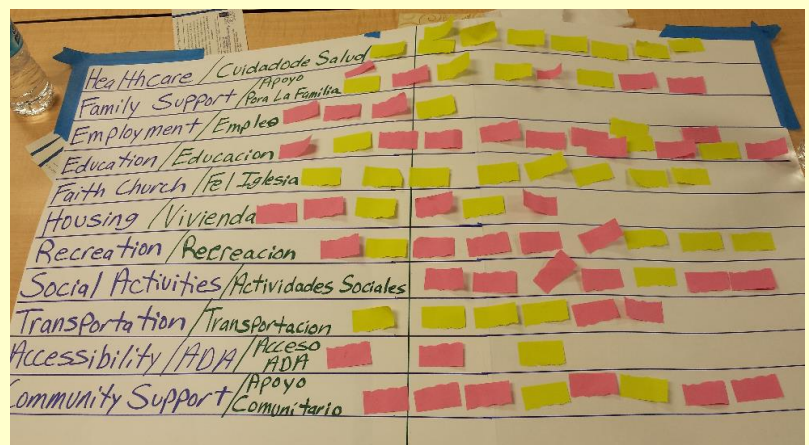
- 1) Healthcare,
- 2) Faith/Church, and a 3-way tie between,
- 3) Family Support, Recreation and Transportation.

Top 3 challenges were:

- 1) Education,
- 2) Social Activities, and
- 3) Community Support.

 “Yellow Dots” signify community strengths

 “Red Dots” signify community challenges



Community strengths and challenges

## Hood River Strengths and Challenges

Results from the small group discussions provided the top three or four answers to the following questions:

- 1) **What do you like, and what are the best things about your community?**
  - There are a variety of specialty services and medical services available in the community
  - Families support – we all learn from and respect one another
  - Spanish radio is community focused and well respected by Spanish speaking community members
  - Agencies such as Eastern Oregon Support Services Brokerage hire culturally diverse staff who are able to meet the diversity needs of the community
- 2) **How does your community view disability?**
  - Some see it as negative and some Spanish speaking families feel isolated
  - Families feel they could use education and support on how to be an advocate for themselves and their children with disabilities
  - Some stereotypes that blame parents for their children's disabilities still exist in our community that are carried over from our home country
- 3) **What does your community value?**
  - Families supporting one another
  - Relationships with the medical community and helping our kids be healthy
  - Strong faith based community
- 4) **What are the priorities of your community?**
  - Working with the schools to help kids with disabilities get a good education in a safe and bully-free environment
  - Ensuring families have the resources and supports they need to raise happy and healthy children
  - More social and culturally appropriate activities for families and kids of all ages
- 5) **Who represents families in your community?**
  - Moms, dads, aunts and grandmothers
  - Next Door and Eastern Oregon Support Services
  - Faith- based community is welcoming to families with children with disabilities

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*“At times we [Spanish-speaking community] don’t feel comfortable asking for help so we hide.”*

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### Local Resource

Marisa Marquez with Oregon Family to Family Health Information Center attended the session and is available to assist families with children with disabilities to navigate the health care system. She can be reached at 541-806-8977 or marquez@ohsu.edu

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*“It is important for all families of children with disabilities to learn about and understand the laws that govern their rights in the public education system.”*

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#### 6) What are some of the challenges facing your community?

- Lack of information in Spanish about the disability service providers, Voc. Rehab and education services for families and people with disabilities
- Language barriers – there are not enough translation services for Spanish speakers
- Lack of mental health services – services are limited and thus long wait times for both evaluations and services
- Lack of inclusion of children with disabilities in sports and recreational opportunities

## Dream BIG

The night was wrapped up with the attendees being asked to dream big and answer the question,

#### 7) “What would you or your community do if you knew that you could not fail and money was not a problem?”

- Numerous accessible support groups for parents, families and children
- A recreation center for kids and families of accessible children with disabilities that is welcoming, and staffed by knowledgeable disability experts
- A comprehensive one-stop agency that is culturally responsive to provide all the necessary information to families of children with disabilities
- An exceptional and high quality educational experience for students with disabilities K-12 that is inclusive and the “best of the best”

## What’s Happening Now!

Several families have joined together to start a support group for Latino families with children with disabilities. For more information contact Liliana Bello at 541-426-0324 or [lilianab@nextdoor.org](mailto:lilianab@nextdoor.org)

## Next Steps for PODD

PODD representatives would like to thank everyone who came out for the Listening Session and for sharing their perspectives and ideas. The Session was a great success and only possible because of our agency partners and all of you, the community members. As a collaborative of agencies, PODD, is dedicated to serving and reaching all Oregonians with disabilities, we are going to be working with the information you provided and use it to help inform our overall planning and outreach efforts.

**Thank you!**

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*“Special thanks to our community partner – The Next Door Inc., Mid-Columbia Health Equity Advocates!”*

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