

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,
- perceptions of 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 Klamath Falls

The first of the three listening sessions took place in Klamath Falls. There were approximately 40 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."



Klamath Falls Strengths and Challenges

Results: Strengths and Challenges Posting Activity

“We need lawmakers and policy makers to understand what it is like to live under regulations that do not address the needs of rural communities”

Topic	Community Strengths	Community Challenges
Healthcare	6	12
Family Support	4	3
Employment	2	17
Education	9	7
Faith/Church	10	3
Housing	3	8
Recreation	9	8
Social Activities	14	4
Transportation	6	13
Accessibility/ADA	10	2
Community Support	11	3


Attendees felt their community’s:


Top 3 strengths were:

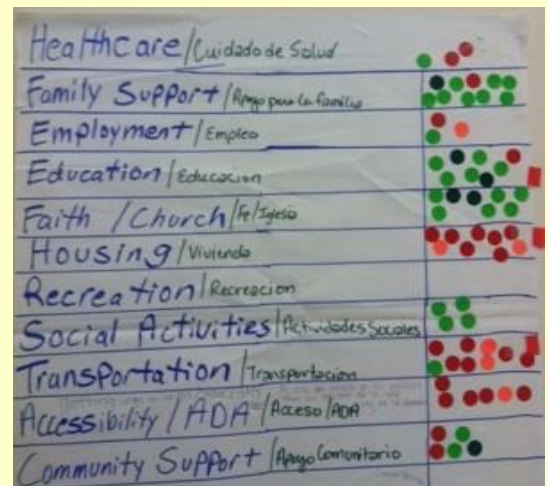
- 1) Social Activities,
- 2) Community Support, and a tie between
- 3) Faith/Church and ADA Accessibility.

Top 3 challenges were:

- 1) Employment,
- 2) Transportation, and
- 3) Healthcare.

 “Green Dots” signify community strengths

 “Red Dots” signify community challenges



Community strengths and challenges

Klamath Falls Strengths and Challenges

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

- 1) *What do you like, and what are the best things about your community?*
 - Giving community – people are generous and kind
 - Lots of recreational opportunities - beautiful environment
 - Proximity of services to one another
 - School system: specifically post-secondary transition
 - Tribal health services
 - Strong community bonds – people know and support one another
 - Service agency staff are caring people and do their best to help people
 - The variety and number of disability service agencies

- 2) *How does your community view disability?*
 - As a setback or obstacle
 - Everyone has a disability at one time or another
 - We see ability vs. seeing disability
 - We see the person first and disability second- we would like the community at large to view disability this way too

- 3) *What does your community value?*
 - Youth and helping and supporting youth
 - People who are very vulnerable and who are in need of services and support.
 - Educational opportunities for everyone

- 4) *What are the priorities of your community?*
 - School programming needs more oversight to provide services for kids who experience physical and/or mental disabilities
 - Accessible Transportation
 - Increased funding to cover basic needs
 - Lack of embracing and serving transient population
 - Mental Health services and dental services
 - More social activities for families and kids of all ages

“We need more social supports and activities for our kids with disabilities and our kids without disabilities.”

“We value people who are very vulnerable and who have a great deal of need to get access to needed supports and services.”

5) Who represents families in your community?

- Moms, dads and grandmothers
- Developmental Disability services
- Klamath Lake Community Action Services
- Strong tribal organization
- SPOKES – Center for Independent Living
- Community organizations and advocates
- SORB

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

- Education: availability, resources and funding
- Collaboration: information sharing between services agencies to reduce duplication and to provide more wrap around services
- Transportation

- More employment opportunities and programs like “Clubhouse International” where people get the services and supports to get and maintain jobs; as well as social support and access to current programs in PDX and Medford
- Leaders of our community come together and work collaboratively to ensure sustainable and adequate funding for all people with disabilities.

*“Special thanks to
Klamath County
Health Dept.
Regional Health
Equity Coalition!”*

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!

Dream BIG

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

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

- People with disability are treated the same and have access to services without obstacles and access to funding
- Access to *all* jobs for everyone
- Services for kids with Autism Spectrum Disorder are available locally including access to medical and diagnostic services, parental support programs, respite care, education and support to develop life skills over the lifespan

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