

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 Madras

The second of the three Listening Sessions took place in Madras. There were approximately 20 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."



Madras Strengths and Challenges

Results: Strengths and Challenges Posting Activity

“There are a lot of great services for people with disabilities offered in Bend, but we need the same high quality and variety of services offered to us here in Madras.”

Topic	Community Strengths	Community Challenges
Healthcare	2	2
Family Support	9	1
Employment	1	2
Education	7	2
Faith/Church	8	0
Housing	0	10
Recreation	0	0
Social Activities	4	0
Transportation	1	9
Accessibility/ADA	0	6
Community Support	3	2

The results showed that attendees felt their community’s

Top 3 strengths were:

- 1) Family Support,
- 2) Education, and
- 3) Faith/Church.

Top 3 challenges were:

- 1) Housing,
- 2) Transportation, and
- 3) ADA Accessibility.

● “Green Dots” signify community strengths

● “Red Dots” signify community challenges



Community strengths and challenges

Madras 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?**
 - Service agencies and community groups are leaders are good at partnering together and providing comprehensive (wrap-around) services for those in need
 - Family is a priority and families support and respect one another
 - School system: specifically post-secondary transition 18-21
 - Agencies 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 blame the family
 - Everyone has a disability at one time or another
 - It can be hard to accept and understand a family member's disability, that is why information and support are needed
- 3) **What does your community value?**
 - Families supporting one another
 - Culture and passing on traditions from one generation to the next
 - Strong faith based community
- 4) **What are the priorities of your community?**
 - Local employment opportunities for youth with disabilities
 - Ensuring families have the resources and supports they need to raise happy and healthy children
 - More social activities for families and kids of all ages
- 5) **Who represents families in your community?**
 - Moms, dads, aunts and grandmothers
 - Kids Clubs
 - School district

“The High School graduation rate for Native American transition aged youth with disabilities is close to 100%!”

“We focus on and identify resources for summer youth programs, but what we really need are family centered supports and programs.”

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

- Learning about the various services for PWD in the community
- Undocumented families' fears around not understanding their rights and their rights of their children who are citizens
- Transportation is very limited and the various transportation systems, i.e., for veterans, foster kids, medical, etc., are cumbersome to navigate
- Language barriers and the need for more accessible English classes

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?"

- People with disability are treated the same and have access to services without obstacles and have access to funding
- Access to holistic health care for everyone
- Agencies are culturally responsive and proactive and they are able to meet the needs of all their clients by offering accessible programs for everyone
- There is housing opportunities for everyone that is decent, affordable, safe and convenient
- Leaders in the community come together and work collaboratively to ensure sustainable and adequate funding for all people with disabilities

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!

*"Special thanks to
our community
partner - Let's Talk
Diversity Coalition!"*

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