



NEWSLETTER

Josephine County Transfers Mental Health Services to Options

Spring 2006, Number 16

Options is pleased to announce that effective July 1st, 2006, Josephine County will be contracting with Options for Southern Oregon to administer existing mental health, alcohol and drug services. Options has a long history of working in partnership with Josephine County Mental Health as well as a variety of other community organizations.

The acquisition of mental health services from Josephine County to Options is causing unprecedented growth for our agency. For example, over the coming year Options staff will increase from 43 to 190+ employees. We are also adding five new residential treatment facilities to our existing seven facilities and increasing the total number of clients served through our programs to over 3,000 individuals per year. From "equipment to values", our goal is to proactively manage the change that is occurring during this transition, and maintaining quality of services is our overriding concern.

Both agencies are working together to provide as smooth of a transition process as possible. We are currently implementing a "transition plan" with dedicated teams of Options and County employees working together. There are a number of issues we are addressing in this process that we hope will improve services throughout the County. Transition topics include such items as integrating technology and information systems and providing office space and equipment needs.

Options is developing a vision for culture and values that we want to continue as we change and grow. Inherent in our vision is a shared treatment philosophy for mental health in Josephine County guiding relationships with consumers, staff, and community partners. With the transfer of Josephine County Mental Health programs and staff to Options, the following benefits should be realized:

a) more resources for mental health services in Josephine County, b) streamlining programs to bring efficiency, c) responding more quickly to changing needs, and d) focusing on coordinated and collaborative provision of mental health services.

Over the coming months there will be several public meetings to further discuss this major transition. Communication meetings are happening throughout the community with contractors, consumers, community partners, and employees. The Executive Team of Options includes people from Options and Josephine County Mental Health.

Options recognizes that the most important element of this transition is a clear, inspirational vision and plan for the continuum and continuity of mental health services. We believe individualized services that are accessible, effective and cost-efficient also promote individual and family responsibility for wellness and safety. We believe that any individual can lead a personally satisfying life as a contributing and respected member of our community.

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MERIT PROGRAM CHANGING LIVES IN JOSEPHINE COUNTY



The MERIT program (Methamphetamine Early Response Intervention Team), funded by a SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) grant, is an interagency collaboration between Options for Southern Oregon, Josephine County Human Services, Adapt, Choices, OnTrack and Dual Solutions. MERIT provides evidence-based treatment and support for individuals and their families who are struggling with meth abuse.

Meth abuse is sweeping the nation and has reached epidemic proportions in Josephine County. The rampant use of methamphetamine in our region makes it critical that effective evidence-based treatment strategies be developed and implemented.

The purpose of this three-year grant is to expand the capacity of local organizations to reduce methamphetamine abuse among adults in Josephine County, helping them to establish a clean and sober lifestyle, improving their physical health, and reducing criminality, homelessness, and psychiatric crisis.

The MERIT team is composed of three new case managers, a team leader, nurse consultant, psychiat-

ric nurse practitioner, research assistant, administrative support staff and treatment specialists from four different agencies. MERIT offers a holistic approach, including effective substance abuse treatment using the Matrix model. Matrix consists of an intensive outpatient program incorporating group and individual strategies, as well as family involvement and community-based support groups for recovery.

In addition, MERIT staff offers individual strengths-based case management to address other needs such as access to community resources including housing, medical services, mental health services, employment assistance, legal assistance, and dental services.

The MERIT program is working with a large number of agencies and individuals in the community that offer services and referrals to the program. These include Josephine County Mental Health, DHS, local drug and alcohol recovery organizations, Three Rivers Community Hospital, MAMA (Mothers Against Meth Abuse), Bridges to Success, Siskiyou Health Clinic (medical & dental), local attorneys, Community Justice, and the Women's Crisis Support Team. We have also received volunteer support, including the assistance of a Cave Junction therapist who is volunteering her time, and an acupuncturist and specialist in Chinese medicine who offers free treatment.

"The greatest strength of the MERIT program is its goal to facilitate positive change, and thus be a part of the solution. When participants come into MERIT, they become partners in that change. MERIT benefits not only those individuals enrolled in the program but their families and community as well."

Linda Joens

Team Leader, MERIT

A key issue faced by so many individuals addicted to meth is how the expense of treatment can be met without a job or means to pay for treatment. Additionally, even if an individual obtains and gets through treatment, there are still difficult barriers for reintegration into society such as dental care issues, criminal histories, and difficulty finding employment.

In the first few months of the program we are beginning to see many successes, including individuals securing housing, employment, children being reunited with their parents, and people moving their lives forward. The program has helped people with health issues, mental health assessments, assistance getting access to necessary medication, and trading unhealthy relationships and lifestyles for healthy ones.

Oregon Health Plan (OHP) or other insurance is not required for admission into the program. Self-referrals are also accepted by calling the MERIT program (476-2373) M-F from 9 to 5 and asking to speak with a MERIT case manager.

A Bridge to Hope...

Janice is a single mother of three in her late twenties. She is a pretty girl who loves nature and animals. When I met her she was living at the Women's Mission, and DHS had taken her children due to her drug and alcohol use. She had no transportation and no job. What Janice *did* have was a driving desire to get her life back on track and be reunited with her children.

She enrolled in a drug treatment program and actively participated in her recovery. She held fast to her faith and went to church regularly. Her children visited on the weekends.

We scheduled an appointment with Community Action and got her qualified for their rental assistance program, and then we started the search. Three kids, the beloved family dog, no credit and little rental history made finding housing a challenge. We looked at a couple places that seemed like they would work, but Janice didn't qualify. We learned this was common with most property management agencies. About a month later, we looked at a house that was ideal. There was a fenced yard for the dog, a garden for Janice and plenty of room for her boys to run. We visited with the owner for an hour. Janice left her application and we waited. The owner called the next day to ask a couple of questions.

Over the next few days the application process was completed and Janice got to rent her "perfect" home. She not only moved into her new home, but her children were returned to her the same day. They got to come home to their own place. The Bridges to Success Program provided her with furniture and household items from donations. This happened one week before Christmas, so Janice and her children had a wonderful holiday. Today Janice has completed her drug treatment and is clean and sober; she started a job working with animals and loves it; she got a car with her mother's help and is making monthly payments on it. Her family is in "Functional Family Therapy" and their future is hopeful.

Mandy Rucker,
Bridges to Success Case Manager
(participant's name changed)

Options Community Garden— Exciting Events on Hand for Summer!

The *Options Community Garden* is in its second year providing a public gardening space at our main office in Grants Pass.

The Garden provides 30 plots to the general public. Although we have no openings currently available, you may contact us to get on our waiting list should plots become available.

If you are interested in volunteering in the Garden please contact Joe Serres with Options at 476-2373; email: jserres@optionsonline.org.

You can also visit the *Options Community Garden* online at www.optionsonline.org/CommunityGarden.htm

We held this year's first work party in early April.. After a very wet winter we enjoyed breaking ground with our friends and neighbors.

Below is a schedule of events planned for 2006. For information relating to these events, please contact Crystal McMahon at 774-7820.

May 26th, 2-5 PM Garden Opening Party!

Join us for a fun afternoon work party where we will be giving plot holders plants donated from Master Gardeners, Greenleaf & Gooseberries.

There will be a potluck lunch.

Please bring your plants and let's have some fun!

August 4th, 5-10 PM Dinner Fundraiser and Friday Night Art Night!

Please join us for a wonderful evening show of various artists featuring portrayals of the Community Garden. We will also have a dinner fundraiser during the event! Volunteers are needed during the event to wait tables and clean up. We are also seeking submissions of artwork.

October 13th, 2-5 PM Harvest Party and Potluck!

Come down to the garden for a celebration of the bounty of the harvest season. Enjoy a potluck with neighbors and friends and begin cleanup of the garden plots.

The Lodge at Riverside Inn– Working with Employment Works



*The Lodge
at
Riverside
Inn*

Since the beginning of the Employment Works (EW) program, Options employment coordinators have strived to make lasting connections with employers throughout the Southern Oregon community. One of our most rewarding employer relationships is with The Lodge at Riverside Inn, a beautiful river lodge situated on the Rogue River in Grants Pass.

The Lodge at Riverside is one of the West Coast's premier "Country House Inns." They have a newly remodeled convention center and a beautiful, distinct location on the Rogue River. The Lodge features full convention services with meeting rooms, breakout rooms, full-service food options, and spacious, comfortable sleeping rooms. It is the only convention center on the Rogue River that features such a range of services and amenities. In addition to the meeting and conference capabilities, the Lodge at Riverside has a total of 33 rooms & suites and the sister property across the road, The Riverside, has 147 rooms.

The Lodge is a dynamic place to work for participants in the Employment Works program. The Lodge has placed four employees working with the EW program. It was such a positive experience for both the employer

and employee after the first EW participant was placed at the Lodge that they made a commitment to have at least one EW client working there full time. Currently, there are three EW individuals on staff, including one person whose exceptional work has provided him with promotional opportunities.

Relationships are a key part of the success between an employer and the Employment Works program. Wynniss Grow, Director of Sales & Convention Services for The Lodge, has been very supportive and a great partner in the employment process. Her experience working with supported employment programs began earlier in her accomplished hotel & resort management career. While working at the famous Coco Palms Hotel in Hawaii and the Stouffer Waiohai at Poipu Beach on the Island of Kauai, she had the opportunity to hire employees from vocational rehabilitation programs at both hotels.

Wynniss notes that the key to a successful employer relationship is to look at an employee's work ethic and skills and work with EW coordinators to match that person to an appropriate job. According to Wynniss, the EW staff is a "very dedicated group of people" and they have earned a deep respect for their patient support of both the employee and the employer. She emphasizes the value and importance of employment coordinators developing the job position through finding job leads, providing support through the

"We have established with the Employment Works program an open-door, two-way relationship based on trust and a mutual desire to see folks succeed."

Wynniss Grow

Director, Sales & Convention

entire interview and placement process, and ongoing support once the employee is hired. ZoeAnn Northcutt, Employment Works Manager, says the relationship that EW has developed with The Lodge has been "golden" and she truly appreciates Wynniss' feedback and flexibility. According to Wynniss, "Participating in the Employment Works program only requires a level of patience with people that a good employer should have with their employees- and I can always find support through Options staff."

OPTIONS FEATURED IN SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT TRAINING VIDEO

Options Employment Works program is being featured in a national training video produced by the Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center and Johnson & Johnson. The purpose of the training video is to demonstrate the skills, competencies, and activities of job development for employment specialists.

Employment Works of Jackson County Celebrates Their One-Year Anniversary!

The Jackson County Employment Works program is celebrating its one-year anniversary serving clients out of our Medford office. We are very pleased with the initial success of the program, and there have been many accomplishments since starting the program in Jackson County. The most important outcome that the Employment Works staff emphasizes is the clients' success in the workplace. Options also wants to extend its appreciation to the various Jackson County employers that we work with, who have been fabulous in providing job opportunities and support.

The relationships we have established in Jackson County with community partners such as Vocational Rehabilitation, Social Security and Rogue Community College have paved the clients paths for a smoother transition into work. Another important aspect of supported employment is the growing partnership we have with Jackson County Mental Health and our shared understanding of the work we are doing in the community. According to Jackson County Employment Works Program Manager Crystal McMahon, "The most rewarding aspect of this job has been witnessing clients who went to work or school and created a catalyst for positive change in their lives. Participants in the program have moved forward in their personal lives, becoming their own payee, getting driver's licenses, moving into independent housing, and saving for purchasing a car. Working, in many cases, seems to engage a level of motivation that can even exceed the job."

Last year Options Employment Works programs in both Jackson and Josephine Counties were featured in a national supported employment training video, and won the national Eli Lilly Reintegration Award for the "On the Job" category. The program was featured in both local television and newspaper articles that highlighted clients success in working.

Overall, nearly 100 clients received supported employment in Jackson County and about 60 percent went to work or college. This is a huge success for a new program and for the clients in Jackson County. This accomplishment is reflected in positive reviews from participants and by the amount of referrals that continue to flow into the program. Next year the program plans to participate in a mental health research project funded by Social Security and Dartmouth College that will expand supported employment services in our region. Employment Works of Jackson County is excited about continuing to assist clients in their recovery, in returning to work, going to college, and realizing their dreams.

For more information about Jackson County Employment Works please contact Program Manager Crystal McMahon at 774-7820.

Options Receives Funding

Options is pleased to announce the receipt of a multi-year grant from the Murdock Charitable Trust to fund a Development Director position.

Options is also pleased to announce receipt of a \$5,000 grant from U.S. Bank.

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