



Southern Oregon Early Learning Services

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Good afternoon Chair Lively, Vice-Chair Hack, Vice-Chair Piluso, and members of the committee.

I am René Brandon, Director for the Southern Oregon Early Learning Hub, serving Jackson and Josephine Counties. I am pleased to have the opportunity to highlight Southern Oregon's efforts to create a Community of Practice with our early learning system partners to better serve families with adverse childhood experiences and trauma.

As Dorothy shared in her introduction, the 16 early learning hubs focus on reaching and improving the services for the young children and families who are furthest from opportunity and we work with many sector partners to do so. Although the overarching goals of each hub are the same, the strategies to reach the goals are varied and dependent upon the strengths and champions within each region.

I want to share with you the efforts underway in Jackson and Josephine Counties to become a trauma-informed region and how the early learning hub is supporting this work. National data from the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Study shows us that children who experience abuse, neglect or family dysfunction have a disproportionately higher rate of disease and disability, learning and productivity problems, and early death due to the cumulative impacts these experiences have on early brain development.

The conditions were right in the last year to begin to move beyond pockets of effective trauma-informed practice, to systems level commitment. We are fortunate to have Peter Buckley coordinating Southern Oregon Success, our region's cradle to career initiative. The early learning hub is a partner of this collective impact effort, representing the first segment of the continuum for Southern Oregon Success. In the last year, Southern Oregon Success has been able to bring an infusion of lectures and conferences from national experts to speak on the impact of adverse childhood experiences and trauma, as well as the resiliency that can be possible when multi-sector community partners embrace trauma-informed strategies and practices. We now have a strong group of local trainers who are offering free training to any business or agency requesting it. They have provided training to seventy partner organizations, resulting in 2,000 individuals receiving foundational knowledge since May of 2016 when this began to roll out.

Trainings continue to be requested each month, and a common knowledge base and terminology around trauma-informed practice is becoming part of the landscape in the region.

It was at this point that our EL Hub asked...So now what? What will be different in our as a result of all of this training and education? We know that knowledge without application does not produce change. Awareness isn't enough. Our hub wanted to harness the enthusiasm in our region and decided to bring an idea to our Hub Agency Advisory Council, a monthly meeting of direct service partners representing 40 agencies and many sectors. Would they be willing to utilize our monthly group as a Community of Practice, using the abundance of training we have available to us as a foundation to build upon?

The partners around the table said YES and agreed we would benefit from supporting each other in our journey toward becoming more trauma-informed in our practices and services. Each month, the hub is bringing resources, tools, and encouraging the dialogue to continue to improve how we serve families through a trauma-informed lens. Other areas who have embraced these practices as a region – Cowlitz County, Washington, as one example - have seen dramatic improvement in their community metrics over several years, including infant mortality, teen pregnancy, youth suicide, youth arrests, and high school dropout rates. We are only a few months into this new Community of Practice model and we look forward to sharing our transformation data as our commitment to action grows roots and blossoms.

A compelling example of the importance of trauma-informed practices the story of a local 24-year-old woman with a six-year-old son. She is homeless, suffering emotional and physical abuse, anxiety and depression, low self-worth, and is struggling with addiction. Her son is living with his father while her life spins out of control. Last week, she garnered the strength to arrive for intake at one of our addiction recovery centers. The doors to the clinic open at 7:30 M-F and the facility is able to accommodate five intakes each morning. The line begins to form by 6:45 or 7 am, outside, in the cold, in partial darkness, with the shame of lining up with other addicts. After overcoming those obstacles, if this young woman is not one of the first five to get in line, she needs to rally the strength to try again the next day. And the next. Until she is either successful or gives up - all while homeless, suffering abuse, feeling ashamed, and fighting addiction. If this facility were able to adopt more trauma-informed practices for their intake services, how might that change the life of this young woman and her son? This is just one very small example of the power of trauma informed practices on real services to real people.

This is true systems work and our hub is committed to supporting efforts like this that lead to healthy, stable, and attached families who are able to support their children's success.

Thank you for your time today.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Rene B." with a long horizontal line extending from the end.