

May 28, 2024

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Robinson and members of the Senate Interim Committee on Human Services:

My name is Allison Stark, and I am the CEO of Albertina Kerr, a member of the governor-appointed System of Care Advisory Council (SOCAC) and a board member for the Arc Oregon and the Oregon Resource Association (ORA). While the majority of my career has been in the community provider setting, I also served as the Director for the Division of Developmental Disabilities for the State of Illinois from 2019 to 2022. I am here to share my thoughts on the skills and attributes I hope to see in the long-term ODDS director.

I want to first state that my comments are not related to current or past leadership. Oregon has been lucky to have several outstanding Directors. But we're at a critical turning point in the service system and we need vision, innovation, and leadership to move the system forward.

- We need a leader who is comfortable operating with a **high level of transparency**. For example, the Vision Advisory Committee, the ODDS empowered entity that reviews policy decisions and makes recommendations for the system as a whole, is a closed meeting. These meetings should be open to the public with an opportunity for public comment, membership should be transparent and democratic, and the minutes and outcomes of this work should be accessible and available to all who may be interested.
- We need a leader with experience in **change management**. They should have a deep knowledge of best practices and policy development in the disability service field but also understand the complexity and impact of operationalizing systems change for families and providers. Often policy changes or administrative rules are developed with little to no focus on the impact of the changes on those responsible for carrying out the changes. In addition, it is often unclear why changes are being made.
- We need a leader that has experience with **developing service rates** that incentivize providers to provide the types of services that people with disabilities want. Oregon did this with employment service rates and it was wildly successful at getting people with disabilities community-based employment. In a system with limited funding, it is important to develop priorities and fund those priorities to make them successful.
- We need a leader that is a strong advocate for **livable wages for frontline staff**. With that being said, employing frontline workers is an acknowledged challenge across the nation. We need a leader that values innovation, will commit to helping craft creative staffing strategies and solutions and will explore the uses of **adaptive and remote technologies** to help people with disabilities be more independent without having to always rely on direct staff support.

- We need a leader that is willing to **assess the Oregon Intervention System (OIS)**, which is the training system for staff on implementing the principles of Positive Behavior Support, to ensure it is meeting the needs of providers and people with disabilities, especially those with **highest mental and behavioral health needs**. We also need to review our rates of restraint in our community-based group homes and compare them to rates across the country. We should be moving towards a **zero-restraint service system**.
- We need a leader that will **partner with Child Welfare and the Oregon Health Authority** to best support youth with complex needs. 40% of youth in temporary lodging have a developmental disability and additional mental or behavioral health diagnosis, oftentimes complicated by a history of trauma. We need to build a service system that brings together services across DHS, OHA and the Care Coordination entities to ensure that youth with complex needs are getting the services they need and deserve. This may include developing new models and services.
- Most of all, we need a leader that can **listen** to individuals with disabilities and their families, providers, and other stakeholders to create a service system that is truly responsive.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my feedback. I'm excited and optimistic about the road ahead.



Allison Stark

CEO, Albertina Kerr