

MEDIA RELEASE

Date: **May 13, 2021**

Contact: Kasey Knutson, Public Information Officer, 509-962-7515

Kittitas County Starts Program to Increase Post High School Employment for Students with Disabilities

The Kittitas County Developmental Disabilities program partners will begin a new program that aims to increase the number of students with disabilities who exit the school system to be connected to a job or post-secondary education. The program called Job Foundations uses partners from local school districts, Developmental Disability Administration (DDA), Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Kittitas County, Elmview, Entrust, along with students and families. The program is specific to students who are 19 years old, eligible for DDA services, and currently in school and plan to remain in school until 21 years of age.

The Job Foundation Project is a collaborative effort to engage students earlier in targeted employment planning and connection to the adult service system. Employment providers will use their expertise to gather important foundational information about skills and supports needed for a job. They will work in partnership with school staff to leverage vocational, academic, and life skill preparation being done in the schools on behalf of the individual student. The intent is that with a completed Job Foundation report, a student and their team will have an actionable next step for employment. The employment provider will be ready to serve the student through DVR in either a Community Based Assessment or job placement plan in their last year of school. Students are asked to commit to stay in school to continue skill development and access school resources. The goal is more students complete transition programs with a job or secondary education connection.

“We have an incredible network of partners in Kittitas County,” states Kasey Knutson, Developmental Disabilities Coordinator. These partners have already formed a Transition Network that has been operating in our county for over twenty years. The Transition Network is ready to provide more options for families and students in Kittitas County, so we are excited to start Job Foundations and provide more local opportunities.”

More information about job foundations can be found via the DDA County Best Practices website at <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dda/county-best-practices> under the Value Based Payment Project heading. For information about eligibility and application information for DDA, please visit www.dshs.wa.gov. For questions about how to apply for the local job foundations program, please contact the Developmental Disabilities Coordinator Kasey Knutson at 509-962-7090.

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