

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde PL 102-477 narrative report for 10/1/13-9/30/14

We have come to the end of another very productive year. As we embark on the 3rd year of our approved 477 plan, we do so with the knowledge that what we have been doing is working. However, this does not mean we can rest easy. It means we need to reinforce what works and change or redesign what has not worked. Some of the services we provided were: General Assistance, otherwise known as cash assistance for individuals who live below the state poverty or TANF standard and need assistance to seek suitable employment to move toward self-sufficiency. We have had to make general assistance much more difficult to obtain. The issue was that many saw GA as a means to an end. Many individuals applied for 477 program services because they had "bills to pay". Most of these individuals did not mention going to work as a way to get the bills paid. Instructing said individuals about the true nature and intent of 477 has been a difficulty since I began managing this program in 2010. Generational and entrenched poverty are proving very difficult to overcome. Happily, we have utilized support services a lot this year. We had numerous applicants that had been recently hired, or were in the process of obtaining employment and we were able to assist them in this. We also utilized diverted services. We had several individuals who had been employed, but were not making it financially. Low wages and the rise in the cost of living were making it difficult for AI/ANs to maintain their household, at times even with 2 incomes. By utilizing diverted services we were able to shore up these individuals, keep them in their jobs and make life a little easier on them.

We were instructed by Francis Dunne, during his visit, to create and implement a new intake form. We have done so and it is working very well. Our intake sessions are providing a better understanding of why the individual is in the state he/she is in. Therefore, a list of

activities is produced and explained to the applicant as to what their responsibilities are and what they can expect from the employment and training caseworker. There must be measureable progress in a case before an individual can expect GA. The EDPs have become stronger and more measurable. For individuals with little to no work history, we often times turn to the TTAP.

The Temporary Trial Assessment Plan (TTAP) piece of our program has not been as heavily utilized as it was last year. This is mainly because there has been more employment opportunities, albeit short term, in our area. TTAPs usually last 90 days and are put in place to assess whether or not an individual is ready to go to work. The fact remains it may be too steep a climb depending on the circumstances. If a person is coming out of AOD treatment or incarceration, there may be mandated activities that can get in the way of someone trying to go to work. We take these things in to consideration and move forward with person centered motivational techniques. The TTAP provides an opportunity for the individual to experience what it takes to maintain employment, without the risk of being separated because of the barriers that stand in the way. Often times, an individual will perform well in a TTAP and that may lead to full time employment or work within our tribal temp pool.

The tribal temp pool has stepped in and has put many of our tried and true TTAPs to work. OJTs through our Vocational Rehabilitation Program have increased to deal with many of the individuals living with disabilities, with little to no work history, criminal history, and/or AOD issues. Most often there is a disability that has gone undiagnosed, so an individual will not get the treatment they need until the pattern reveals itself and the client is ready to move on. Another partner we have relied heavily upon this year is our Tribal Employment Rights Office

(TERO). TERO has also played a major role with our skilled clients. There has been a boom in construction activity on and near the reservation and TERO are ensuring AI/ANs are represented in the proper numbers on tribally and/or federally funded jobs. Moreover, we have a shared "skills bank" that we utilize. Ensuring we have all of the requisite releases of information in place, we get to work getting the client to work.

It has been a very busy year. We served 274 individuals which is 29 more than last year. Of those, a good percentage entered in to employment (part and full time) earned a post-secondary certificate or GED and were awarded Social security Disability Insurance. This is one area that grew substantially for us this last year is General assistance recipients who were medically or psychologically unable to work or look for work.

Francis Dunne visited our campus in July of 2014 and was impressed with his findings. He had a couple of suggestions in regards to program procedures, which we took care of and adopted as best practices. One of his suggestions that we worked on, as well, was to rename (or rebrand) our program. Using only the name 477 program causes much confusion, as most lay people are not familiar with the public law for which it is named. In a flash of creative genius, I came up with the acronym G.R.E.A.T. which stands for Grand Ronde Employment And Training. It should be noted that, at this time, this has not been approved by the executive office or Tribal Council, but my hopes remain high.

Grand Ronde is still a hard place to find work. Employment opportunities are growing in the area, but so is the low income housing. By inviting more individuals and families to what is virtually an employment desert, is putting the cart before the horse in terms of opportunity.

However, the community has been getting excited about some newer projects. The community garden was a great success. The harvest supplied organically grown, fresh fruits and vegetables to our elders, preschool children and families in need. Some of the produce was sold to tribal employees to ensure the garden maintains its self-supported status. Grand Ronde Food and Fuel (GRFFC) continue to be a partner in providing employment and training opportunities to American Indian/Alaska natives who live on or near the reservation. There has been a boon in the increase of prevailing wage job opportunities this last year and 477 and VR and TERO have supported many individuals in their search for gainful meaningful employment with a future.

Besides the work we do in Grand Ronde, we also serve the Portland metro area. We held an open house, which was very well attended and resulted in referrals made between the 2 programs and led to employment in the construction field for several individuals. Portland is a hard nut to crack, as there are so many resources, the individuals who apply to our 477 program have been unsuccessful with other programs, i.e. TANF and the majority of them really do not want to go to work. Some people who do want to work are described below.

There have been some changes to staff, with more changes to come in the near future. Michael Herrin has moved on to a full time position with the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. His absence makes room for a FTE employment and training caseworker position. Barbara Gibbons, who has been in a trainee position, for about a year, is now eligible to apply to the employment and training caseworker position, created by Michael Herrin's leaving 477. Pearl Rife is in her 5th year of working in 477. She works primarily with Grand Ronde tribal members.

She has a historical knowledge of the community, the family makeups and an institutional knowledge one could never learn in school. Pearl has been employed by the tribe in several positions for the last 21 years. Khani Schultz works with the Portland area natives. She works primarily with the non-Grand Ronde tribal members. I find this the best way to provide the highest level of services to this group. She enjoys the challenge and we are lucky she is willing to put in the extra hours. There are several issues that make working with this population more difficult. One is ascertaining whether or not the applicant is eligible for services due to level of oncome. Khani must put her detective cap on at times to discover whether or not some of these applicants might have services available to them by their own tribe, or maybe they receive per capita and/or other kinds of income monthly or annually. Kalene Contreras is still on board as VR/477 administrative assistant.

We faced the usual barriers, but this year we had an unusual number of cases in which the client just did not want to participate in order to receive services. We deal with a handful of individuals who just cannot stay out of trouble with the law. We deal with individuals whose self-esteem is so low that they believe they are not capable of working and do not deserve a better life. We face these challenges head on and this writer thinks we do a very good job of assisting American Indians and Alaskan Natives overcome the obstacles. Transportation is improving, but is still an issue. Lack of employment opportunities is the largest barrier. Lack of employment opportunities with room for advancement is another area in which 477, VR, tribal and casino HR and TERO have been meeting to find ways to improve this for AI/AN in the area. Some very good ideas are coming out of those meetings. I look forward to us all moving in to our new building and enacting these ideas as soon as possible.

It is my job to manage the 477 program and its staff. Most often, I do not carry a caseload, as I also manage the vocational rehabilitation program and that takes up a lot of my time. That is why I like for the caseworkers to tell their own success stories. The caseworker has the best window into what took place with the plan, its implementation and what worked and what did not.

Pearl Rife- In January 2014, a 28 year old male came to our office to see if he could get some assistance in getting his life in order. He had trouble in the past with drugs, for which he had severed some jail time. He wanted to start over. He lived with his Grandmother and was working with Behavioral Health and ICW. He wanted to connect with his 5 year old child that he had never met. He also wanted to get his GED, own home, driver license, and then maybe go on to college. Well, he has achieved all of this and more. By 2/25/14 he had his GED. He then enrolled in college in hopes to enter their automotive program. For this he needed his driver's license. On 4/1/14 he brought in in his certificate of completion from Behavioral Health, which gained him visitation rights to meet his child. By 6/16/14 he had his license. He was subsequently accepted to the automotive program and by 8/29/14 was moving into his own home. For the time being he no longer needs our help. It was an honor to help this young tribal man and to work with this team of professionals that assisted him on his path to self-sufficiency.

Khani Schultz- A 34 year old female with limited employment history entered into TTAP in April 2014 for clerical experience. In the beginning of the TTAP the client appeared to be performing satisfactorily. However, while in training, it was necessary for Employment and Training caseworkers to meet with the TTAP site supervisor and client to discuss client work

performance, including attendance, job duties, and communication. During this time client applied for other employment opportunities but agreed to finish TTAP. On November 18th 2014, client was selected for a full time Health Information Technician position. With TTAP experience, counseling by E & T caseworker and support services, client began new employment. Today, client continues to work as a Health Information Technician with a current wage of 15.17 per hour.

Barbara Gibbons: I assisted my client in setting up appointments to qualify for the 477 Program. Client met the requirements of the program per policy and was initially entered into the program as a job seeker and expressed interest in any available training programs. Client was assisted in applying for a gaming license to get back to working for Spirit Mountain Casino and received assistance for the background check. He was picked for dealer school, however, did not qualify. He was directed toward opportunities in the town he was staying and followed through with each one. I assisted him in signing up with Work Source and creating a resume. I suggested he may even attempt to volunteer for skill building and client was offered a volunteer position in exchange for vouchers for winter clothes. He made friends with a co-worker and was able to establish a place to stay once his time was up at his relatives. He was assisted through the process of signing up for tribal housing and bus passes to help him meet all of his meetings at the casino. He also made a goal to purchase a vehicle with his per capita and did so. Client was assisted in obtaining a TTAP position @ GRFF through collaborated efforts and received supported services to gear him for the position and to assist him with fuel until he began receiving an income. Client was counseled and monitored throughout his training and completed successfully. He was offered & accepted a permanent position 6/14/14. Client is still

currently employed. He is no longer homeless and is in line to receive a residence of his own in the near future.

Michael Herrin: As 477 employment and training caseworkers we are awarded the task of assisting individuals in securing employment. Securing employment may appear to be a relatively basic idea; however, there are numerous variables to be considered when an individual chooses a career. As caseworkers we are afforded the opportunity to support individuals is addressing joblessness, homelessness, physical and mental disabilities, substance abuse issues, cultural identity, education and technical training. The intrinsic benefit of self-sufficiency is not easily quantified but the effect on our community is clearly noticeable. As caseworkers we are aware of the resilience of our Indigenous communities and are able to assist participants in aligning with their potential.

As caseworkers we sometimes focus on the anecdotal evidence of two or three cases where the odds of success seemed insurmountable to the individual; tribal members who repeatedly struggle, eventually meeting with success. While these cases are true success stories there are a vast number of individuals who utilize our services and progress in a steady upward trajectory.

One such individual could be used as an example of the common effect we have on our tribal community. As a caseworker I was able to work with a Tribal member who accessed the 477 program in July of 2014. The individual had recently been hired as a prep-cook though Spirit Mountain Casino and requested transportation services. After confirming employment I was able to speak with the Casino HR where I learned that the individual had been coming in early and staying after his shift to learn the cooking process. After discussing his employment/career

goals w/ the individual I learned he had aspirations of becoming a full time cook. Together we were able to draw up a case plan where the individual was not only able to access transportation services but was able to secure a set of cooking knives through the 477 program where he was able to train as a cook. The consumer is still working toward a career in culinary field where he is able to support his family. In conclusion, the upward trajectory of the 477 consumers is not the exception but rather the day to day rule of our tribal community's ability to overcome adversity.

These few vignettes illustrate the work we do. Our attention to our history and how it affects our future is vital in the work we do. We bear in mind the principles of the 7 generations. We know that when we work with a tribal person, we work with those who came before him/her and those who are yet to come. It is a privilege to do this work and we are honored to be able to continue to do so.

Thank you for your continued support. I look forward to writing this report next year with even better outcomes and success stories.

Sincerely,

Leslie Riggs

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