



April 2021

# The Focus

It's 2021, and The Focus has a new look and a new format. The Oregon APSE Governing Board wants its membership to know what is happening in employment; not just in Oregon but nationally. We will be having approximately six shorter newsletters annually. Please provide feedback to assure we are meeting your needs.



## The Past Year

by Erin Cochrun-Weston

Assistant Director (DDS) for Albertina Kerr and Oregon APSE Board member

**March 13, 2020: a day that will go down in history as the day the state of Oregon shut down due to COVID.**

I will always remember where I was when we heard Governor Brown make the declaration that “we [were] going into lockdown for two weeks.” At the time my organization was supporting over 65 people in community jobs and had four very active Project SEARCH sites serving over 25 people. I happened to be in one of those programs on the historic day, and I remember vividly thinking and talking with my colleagues about how it was only two weeks, we could use the time to develop more curriculum and get caught up with other projects. Little did we know by the end of March all but about five of our supported employees would be laid off, all four of our Project SEARCH programs would close for the remainder of the year, and the lockdown would be extended indefinitely. Sadly, our organization was not the only employment provider essentially shut down. My organization was lucky enough to be able to deploy staff into our group homes. For those providers without these options, things were much more grim. Many organizations had to close and/ or announce major layoffs.





## The Past Year (cont'd)

As a provider organization, everyone rallied together and worked with the state to help advocate for financial support such as contingency funding and extra VR payments. As a result of highly creative people with ODDS and VR, many changes were implemented to assist providers. Some of these changes included virtual services, which helped ensure the safety of both our employees and customers. Many providers, mine included, implemented entirely new programming to incorporate these changes. We initially started creating these services in an effort to keep people who were laid off engaged and not so isolated, but we have since found that these services actually have a place in the post-COVID world as well.

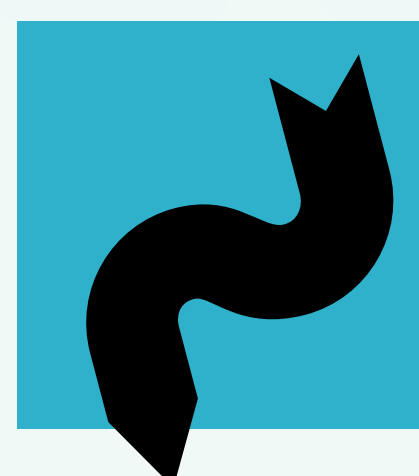
Fast forward to March of 2021, and we really start to see new light and hope. Many people are returning to work, and many others are getting new jobs. There are many new jobs that have been created because of COVID restrictions. We are finding the world of work to be forever changed due to COVID, but not all those changes are negative. It will be exciting to see these changes evolve as more and more people return to work and are vaccinated. There is a silver lining to everything, sometimes you just have to pivot and be open to what is possible!



### Who is our Oregon APSE Mystery Member?

This Mystery Member is an engaging and dynamic presence. She/he/they was foundational and continues to be instrumental in the success of Oregon's Project SEARCH programming. A vocal advocate and leader for employers, the Mystery Member has been a strong voice for their participation that APSE genuinely appreciates.

During the pandemic, weathering super challenging circumstances in the hospitality industry, she/he/they has recently changed companies. Growing up in a large extended Italian, Irish, German family, the Mystery Member has fond memories of Sunday Italian dinners. She/he/ they has lived in many states and traveled throughout the country and the world (even had a brief trip during the pandemic in an RV). At one point the Mystery Member owned a restaurant in Long Island's Wine Country that was positively reviewed by the New York Times. Using her/his/their talents, the Mystery Member is an LBGQTQ activist and also speaks out for other marginalized groups stating, "My passion for working with people who are different is to be a voice for someone who cannot be a voice for themselves." *See who it is at our website*



### Check it Out!

Oregon DD Coalition's

**Go! Project**

Weekly Policy Advocacy Bulletin

### UPCOMING EVENTS

April 7 — APSE Hour 4pm to 5pm  
 April 28 — Job Coach training with Jacque Gerdes  
 April 14 — DD Advocacy Day—Go! Project!  
 April 19-22 — Disability Policy seminar  
 April 22 — Breaking Barriers: Life Beyond Labels Conference



# Covid-19 vaccine: Talk with an Expert



Steve Silverstein, M.D. is an internist and emergency physician based in Santa Cruz, California. He served as the medical director for pandemic and disaster planning and response at McKesson Corporation during the SARS, bird flu, H1N1, and Ebola outbreaks between 2003 and 2016, and has extensive experience in epidemiology, emergency medical services, telemedicine, clinical decision support, and infectious diseases.

**Overview:** With over 25 million COVID infections and over 500,000 COVID deaths in the US, there is finally light at the end of the tunnel. Infections, hospitalizations, and deaths have fallen, and there is hope that this summer will be close to a new normal. For that hope to be realized, widespread COVID vaccination is essential. Despite this, vaccine hesitancy is also widespread. How we address vaccine hesitancy will affect if and when we get to that "new normal." Most vaccine hesitancy is based on concerns that the new vaccines are not safe or not effective. Given the speed of vaccine development and testing these concerns are understandable. Let's look at each of these starting with safety.

**Safety:** All of the vaccines go through extensive safety testing in tens of thousands of patients before being approved. Then, safety continues to be monitored for every vaccine dose. Of the millions of vaccinated Americans there have been no deaths attributed to the vaccines. Does this mean that no serious effects will occur? Probably not, but the likelihood is very, very low. Another safety concern is reactions to the vaccines, including localized redness/pain and systemic symptoms like fever, muscle aches, headache, and fatigue. These are pretty common especially after 2nd doses, and may last for a couple of days. However; these types of reactions are also common after other vaccinations such as the flu and shingles shots. These symptoms do not indicate that the vaccine is unsafe, just that it's stimulating your immune system.

**Bottom line: The currently approved vaccines are safe.**

**Effectiveness:** Do the vaccines work? It turns out that they work way better than anyone expected. **All currently approved vaccines are 100% effective in preventing hospitalization, and death.** They are also highly effective (75-95%), in preventing mild to moderate disease. Although we are not sure if they keep someone from transmitting COVID if infected after being vaccinated, real-world data suggests that this is the case. This data from Israel and elsewhere shows that the vaccines work just as well in the real world as they did in the clinical trials.

Do the vaccines work against variants? They work well against some, and probably not so well against others. This is being actively studied and vaccine makers are studying how to modify their vaccines or dosages to address variants. Is it a reason to wait for a "better" vaccine? Not at all. The most common variant right now is sensitive to current vaccines.

**Bottom line: So, we have vaccines that are safe, that work incredibly well now, and are being updated as needed going forward.**

And yet, people are still hesitant.

**Spreading the Word:** This is where personal relationships matter. If someone you know is hesitant, simply saying that you were vaccinated can have a positive impact. *Also identifying others whom we respect or admire can have an impact. My standard was Dr. Fauci. While I don't know him personally, he is someone I've admired for many years. When he got his, I was ready to get mine. And I felt confident to spread the word.*

My family and I are all vaccinated (2 Moderna, 1 Pfizer, 1 J&J). My physicians and their family members at risk? All vaccinated. Friends and colleagues? Mostly vaccinated or waiting for an appointment.

**We have the opportunity to protect ourselves, our families, and those we work and live with, and to hasten the end of the pandemic. It's up to us to make it happen.**

*Oregon APSE thanks Dr. Steve Silverstein for his knowledge and information about the vaccine for the novel coronavirus.*

