

News Release

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La Pine Oregon Department of Human Services re-welcomes community to its newly renovated, inviting space

La Pine, Ore. -- Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) in La Pine is holding an open house Wednesday, April 16 starting at 1 p.m. to re-welcome the community to its completely renovated and redecorated office. The La Pine office is located at 16493 Bluewood Place in Bluewood Plaza.

The renovation work started March 6 and was recently completed. The revived office space offers a more welcoming, inviting and visually appealing experience with an emphasis on the comfort for the people they serve.

“This was the first office where we’ve done the work of changing the furniture and uplifting the space based on work functions. From here we will assess how the new furniture system affects workflow and how it is received by the public and by the staff,” Karuna Thompson, ODHS Facilities Director, said.

The next step will be assessing when ODHS buildings need additional space or changes in space. Part of that assessment will be looking at the furniture to decide if there is an actual space need or if using the current real estate in different way can better meet the program needs. Using office space more efficiently can be more cost effective than adding more square footage or moving, which is generally more expensive.

“It’s also important that people should be received with dignity and a sense of welcome and comfort when coming to us for help. We need to explore what trauma informed and culturally responsive spaces can look like for the people we serve,” Thompson said.

“Our office was very outdated. It had mostly mismatched furniture and low ceilings. We got the leftover furniture from other offices. We made it work, but we had completely overgrown our space. If everyone showed up from all the programs there would not have been enough space for everyone to work,” Gray Evans, Oregon Eligibility Partnership Manager, said. The office also houses the Aging and

People with Disabilities and Self-Sufficiency programs, which support people with food benefits, long-term care and other services.

The office space was hard to get through and often people winding their way through the cubicles got lost. People would call out, “Marco” like in the children’s game. And someone would answer, “Polo,” to find where they were going.

“The layout didn’t work for the workflow. It was like walking into a true mousetrap game,” Thompson said.

During the renovation the office remained open but most of the 18-person staff worked from home. One Eligibility Worker, one Adult Protective Services worker, five Support Staff and Gray worked out of a small conference room so that the office would remain open to the community.

Now the space has light yellow walls, natural wood walls with black accents. The furniture is heather gray and blue gray with pops of orange, lime green and light tan.

“It is so light and bright and happy. It matches the energy that this team brings to work every single day. The space promotes even more collaboration and communication than before. It also shows the team that they matter. They work hard. They deserve equipment that works and promotes the great team that they are,” Gray said.

“We’ve been excited about the possibility of reimaging our space and transforming it from traditional cubicles to a warm, welcoming environment for employees and people we serve. It was challenging to imagine how different our existing space could look and function. I appreciate our La Pine team being willing to embrace such a large-scale change,” April Munks, District Manager for Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson counties, said.

One of the best improvements in the office is the interview pod. It has the adaptability to accommodate people in wheelchairs and is also great for families. There’s a couch, which means it’s safer for kids than sitting in a chair that could topple over on a child. The space also promotes visibility for the safety of the staff. The pod also has a refresh button that brings in clean air between uses. Everything is wipeable and cleanable.

“The first client to use the pod was a woman in a wheelchair. Her husband was eyeing the comfortable looking lounge chairs located just outside the pod. She went to the pod. And he went to lounge chair by the window,” Gray said.

“If you think about it, our state of mind is shaped by the space we are in. If you walk into space that is warm and welcoming, it’s better for any business. This is a beginning to invest in people’s – both our staff and our community’s – well-being,” Thompson said.

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