

OSECE Success Story

Two years ago, I passed each day the same way, alone and isolated. I would get out of bed and steady myself for the attempt to walk to the kitchen of my one-bedroom apartment. The blinding pain of my back combined with the light-headedness from being upright were my daily reality. I am disabled with metal rods fused up and down my spine and suffer from severe clinical depression that cycled every three weeks. I had lost all hope. My blood pressure was so high it was pounding in my ears, so I reached out and made a doctor's appointment. To my physicians' credit, she realized I was a shut-in and ordered Home -Health to continue my care on a weekly basis. My blood pressure responded to medication and the Home-Health professionals assessed my depression and agoraphobia. Goals were set for appointments in the community to receive services to overcome the barriers that presented in my life. I began receiving therapy at Options. During this time, Options administered a DNA test to determine the correct medication treatment for my body chemistry to treat the debilitating cycling depression. For ten months I continued in therapy, I sought out the medical center in Medford that administered cortisone injections for my back and hips and began to receive the injections with regularity. My depression evaporated with time and I could walk without the aid of a cane. My therapist asked me a question that I won't soon forget. She wondered with all the progress I had made, would I ever consider returning to work? I said yes and a referral was made to Supported Employment. I met with Brenda my Employment Specialist at Options.

My therapist called it "gaining perspective", to me I felt reborn, and I was back amongst the living. I met with Brenda and we discussed my past jobs and career accomplishments, particularly the types of trainings I had done. I explained that I trained as a surgical technologist but could not stand the hours required during any given surgery. She asked me what my employment goals were, I explained that I wanted to work from home and to get out of poverty. She asked if I had ever heard of SOHOPE. She explained the program and told me about the medical coding program offered at Rogue Community College. I was intrigued. This began 6 weeks of required SOHOPE orientations in Grants Pass and Medford. The day came when I entered my computer-generated number into a computer program to find out if I was accepted into the SOHOPE program. Acceptance was completely random. I was accepted! I had to make application to the Medical Coding Program at RCC prior to taking classes.

Brenda had made an appointment with Vocational Rehabilitation. She attended each appointment as the VR counselor, Brenda and I, identified my barriers to employment. Brenda advocated effectively and Vocational Rehab paid for an eye exam and glasses, an office chair that helped my back, a laptop to do homework on and a complete set of dentures so I could smile again.

I began college at RCC in the Spring of 2018. Throughout the year, Brenda has talked me through times of self-doubt as I navigated the difficult classes required to complete my program and to earn my certificate in Medical Coding. We researched employment for Medical Coders and practiced interview skills. Brenda is reliable, consistent, encouraging and steady.

Today I am four weeks from completion of my medical coding program with a 3.75 GPA. No more am I alone. My name is Kathryn, I am 64 years old and I will be returning to the work force in an office setting with a new career. Obstacles are in front of us all. With a glimmer of hope of a plan, self-determination and the right person offering encouraging support while advocating to eliminating barriers, goals can be achieved. My barriers were disability, poverty, and age. Together, Brenda and I overcame them all.