



**million**  
ONE JAIL AT A TIME.  
*story*

## REFORM TOOLKIT

S2 E2

# When Disability Requires a Different Approach

A PODCAST BY

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# WHO

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**Support Services Brokerage**

# WHO

**“I have the ability. I just need a little bit of the tools. That’s all I need. I can do more than what you think.”**

-Pat Hansen, an adult in Portland with I/DD



More than 2 millions adults in the United States have an intellectual or developmental disability (I/DD).

People with I/DD are a diverse group and they include people with autism, those who have had brain injuries, and those exposed to drugs or alcohol before birth. Everyday tasks can be extra-challenging for people with I/DD and dealing with the police and courts present very specific obstacles.

The state has an innovative program called [Support Services Brokerage](#), which connects people with I/DD who are in jail to services like housing, jobs, and therapy. Sometimes it keeps them out of jail altogether.

*Pat Hansen. Photo provided by Pat Hansen.*

# WHAT

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**A Way to Help People with I/DD**

# WHAT

**“The jails and prisons really don’t have the kind of support that these clients need.”**

-Kimber Sieffert, senior case manager at Multnomah County DD Services



Brokerages are non-governmental organizations with case managers that provide an alternative to the county-based services that every state has. Unlike services in other states, however, case managers in Oregon have their brokerage caseloads capped, so they have more time to spend with each client.

Case managers are supposed to check in with each client at least once a month, but some who spoke to *70 Million* reported talking to their clients up to 30 times a day on the phone.

Their mission is to help their clients live independently and connect them to services. But they also are powerful advocates and will intervene when their client becomes involved with the police or other aspects of the criminal justice system.

*Kimber Sieffert. Photo provided by Kimber Sieffert.*

# WHERE



**Oregon**

# WHERE

**In Oregon, 2% of the prison population has been diagnosed with an I/DD, but the actual number may be much higher.**

-Oregon Department of Correction

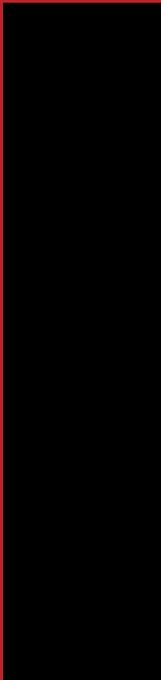


Oregon currently has 12 brokerages serving people with I/DD. Counties and brokerages work together to get the word out about their services through brochures at schools, doctors' offices, and info fairs about I/DD. But not everyone who could qualify will come across a brochure.

The 2006 case of [15-year-old Sir J. Millage](#) shows just what's at stake in Oregon and elsewhere when people with I/DD don't have the support they need to explain or advocate for themselves.

The black teenager was tased and beaten by police officers in Portland after walking over a bridge in the middle of the night carrying a stick. When Millage did not respond to the police and kept walking, the officers assumed he was being defiant. Unable to explain his disability, Millage's interaction with the police quickly escalated.

*Kade Threadgill, who has participated in the brokerage system. Photo by Justin Katigbak.*



# WHEN

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**2001 - Present**

# WHEN

**“Appropriate support services shall be made available to all adults eligible for developmental disability services ... including those enrolled and waiting for non-crisis comprehensive services.”**

**- Staley Agreement**



Like many other states, Oregon used to have large I/DD institutions which often had problems with abuse and neglect. The state started closing them in 1987, and had to connect the thousands of people who relied on the institutions to services individually.

Case managers were overloaded and focused on housing people in staffed group homes and managing crises, rather than the everyday needs of people with I/DD.

In 2000, [five Oregon families with I/DD sued the state](#) claiming they were being denied services that they were entitled to by law. The resulting “[Staley Agreement](#)” created the brokerages. The first clients started enrolling in 2001. With the support of The Affordable Care Act, they’ve been able to expand services and the state no longer has waitlists for help.

*Sign outside of house in Oregon. Photo by Cheryl Green.*

# WHY

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**The Case of  
Kade Threadgill**



# WHY

**“They explained how a person gets to be with a brokerage and that they had to apply to be classified [as] developmentally disabled.”**

**- Deborah Threadgill, Kade’s mother**



Kade Threadgill lives in Beaverton, just outside of Portland with his adoptive parents, Deborah and Ron. Growing up, he had trouble at school and struggled with ADHD.

But at age 19, he switched therapists and was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome, also known as Autism Spectrum Disorder. His parents sought out help for him and attended a conference hosted by the Autism Society of Oregon, where they learned about brokerages.

In order to receive services from a brokerage, Threadgill had to be certified as eligible through the county, essentially proving that he had an I/DD. The process is bureaucratic and can take months to complete. While they’re waiting for the paperwork to go through, Threadgill gets arrested for having a sexual relationship with an underage girl in their neighborhood.

*Kade Threadgill with his dog Ginger. Photo by Justin Katigbak.*

# HOW

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**Offering Range of Services for  
People with I/DD**

# HOW

**“There’s so much emotion that you don’t realize you’re going to feel when you’re actually in jail. You feel like you’re all alone.”**

**- Kade Threadgill**



Threadgill spends two weeks in jail while his parents put together money for jail, and he wasn’t given his ADHD medicine while he was there. He had anxiety attacks daily.

But a few months before his sentencing, the county determined that he qualified for an I/DD classification. His parents shared the county letter with the court and his sentence was reduced from a minimum five years in prison to five years probation. Kade also qualifies for early release and within three years he finishes sex offender therapy and is off probation.

While his classification gave him access to a case manager for the first time, because he doesn’t receive Medicaid his case manager cannot connect him to other services. Those kind of restrictions and a changing political climate have organizers advocating for more funding and more access to services.

*Kade Threadgill with his bow. Photo by Justin Katigbak.*

# RESOURCES

To get started developing a reform project like the Support Services Brokerage:

- [“A Roadmap to Support Services”](#)
- [The Arc’s Criminal Justice Position Statement](#)
- [“Your Right to a Community Life”](#)
- [Access Living’s Disability and Incarceration Initiative](#)
- [“Advancing Public Safety for Officers and Individuals with I/DD”](#)
- [“10 Facts Law Enforcement Needs to Know”](#)

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