

Why is our name different?

In 2014, we changed our name from the Benton County Developmental Disabilities Program to the Benton County Developmental Diversity Program. We did this for several reasons:

- Most people we support do not have a “disability” in that they did not have an ability that they lost. Most were born a certain way and developed a certain way with unique gifts, talents, abilities, and challenges. It is more accurate to say that they represent the diversity of human expression than “disability”.
- Many people identified by others as having “disabilities” do not identify themselves as having “disabilities”. We respect people’s right to tell their own story and create their own identity.
- The people we support have many diverse identities and we support the whole person. Identities related to culture, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or country of origin are also important to people and we honor and respect people however they present themselves to us.
- Disability is largely about the difference between community perceptions of individual abilities and community support to share individual abilities. If our community expected us to be able to fly, we would all be “disabled”. If our community made sure everyone had a jetpack, none of us would be disabled. When a community supports the diverse expressions and abilities of its members, the sense of “disability” is diminished in communities. We want to provide support so people’s abilities are valued.

As we strive to support people in their diverse expressions, abilities, and backgrounds in our communities; we have to acknowledge that historically and currently our communities have fallen short. There have been injustices and inequities that have caused harm for generations and still greatly impact people today. Our name change

from “disability” to “diversity” signals our intention to help build a just, inclusive, equitable, fair, and respectful community for everyone.

The name “Benton” means “settlement in the grassy place or the bent grass”. The land of the Ampínefu or Mary’s River band of the Kalapuya that we also call Benton County is the grassy place where we live. We honor the long legacy of the many people who have resided in this grassy place, who have bent the grass with their presence, and who strive to make it a community rich with life, love, and possibility.