



Working Together to Improve Employment Outcomes for Kansans with Disabilities



PURPOSE

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The Employment Systems Change Coalition (ESCC) represents multiple organizations and advocacy groups throughout Kansas who work together across fields of disability to support the common goal of improving employment outcomes for Kansans with disabilities.



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Members are committed to the long-term process of working together to support not only seeing more people employed, but also addressing systematic barriers to employment for persons with disabilities.



VALUES

VALUES – EMPLOYMENT FIRST

We support Employment First initiatives and recognize this as a “framework for systems change that is centered on the premise that all citizens, including individuals with significant disabilities, are capable of full participation in integrated employment and community life,” as defined by the U.S. Department of Labor.



VALUES – INCLUSION

Regarding systems change, we support a process that is inclusive and considers individuals with disabilities as primary stakeholders. The activities of our grant are based on these values, and we believe that any systems change in Kansas should consider and include feedback from people with disabilities.



VALUES – ALL FIELDS OF DISABILITY

Although each service delivery system may have challenges unique to their field or funding structure, it is absolutely vital that Kansas have a comprehensive approach to improving employment outcomes for all individuals with disabilities.



VALUES – INCLUDE ALL STAKEHOLDERS

No one entity can truly impact systems change. Research shows that top-down and bottom-up strategies both fail in comparison to a systems change process that includes all levels of engagement. It is important to include all stakeholders in any change process.



VALUES – INCLUDE ALL STAKEHOLDERS

- People with Disabilities
- Family Members
- Guardians
- Disability Advocates
- Service Providers
- Informal Supports/Partners
- State Agency Staff
- State & Local Government Employees
- Government Decision Makers
- Businesses



VALUES – PROVEN & EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

As we look across the nation, we can see areas that are experiencing success. The Office for Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) recognizes several key states as high performers and also establishes effective practices. Using strategies with a proven record of success will help encourage buy-in by stakeholders.



ACTIVITY UPDATE



ACTIVITIES – CONSTITUENCY ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholders are being engaged through a variety of methods including focus groups, surveys and interviews. Stakeholder feedback will allow ESCC members to establish a baseline of what is happening in Kansas as well as outline areas of need within the state.



ACTIVITIES – CONSTITUENCY ENGAGEMENT

Focus groups were held across Kansas (June 2015-August 2015) using a research-based town hall method of engagement. This proven method utilizes actual transcripts versus a summary or notes.



ACTIVITIES – CONSTITUENCY ENGAGEMENT

- 7 sessions for persons with disabilities, self-advocates and natural supports
- 7 sessions for service providers, both front line and administration
- 1 session each at the Self-Advocate Coalition of Kansas (SACK) Conference and the Kansas Disability Caucus



ACTIVITIES – CONSTITUENCY ENGAGEMENT

- Online survey (December 2015-present)
- Currently engaging stakeholders in the disability community to obtain diversified survey responses



ACTIVITIES – CONSTITUENCY ENGAGEMENT

- Thus far, we have obtained over 1,000 survey responses from various constituencies and stakeholders including persons with disabilities of all ages, families, guardians, service providers, state employees, etc.
- Survey is currently open and available at <http://tinyurl.com/Kansas1K>



ACTIVITIES – CONSTITUENCY ENGAGEMENT

Although some items demonstrate misperceptions about programs and services, this is to be expected and reveals opportunities for additional education.



ACTIVITIES – CONSTITUENCY ENGAGEMENT

Key Themes:

- Job Opportunities
- Transportation
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
- Transition



ACTIVITIES – CONSTITUENCY ENGAGEMENT

Key Themes (cont'd):

- Supported Employment and/or Longer Term/
Ongoing Employment Supports
- Medicaid Buy-In Programs
- Businesses/Employers
- Managed Care Organizations (MCOs)



KEY ACTIVITIES – STATE MENTORS

Many other states have wrestled with the same employment issues that we have in Kansas, and certain states have demonstrated marked success, either in key areas/programs or overall. This creates opportunities for Kansas to learn from other states' processes in implementing systems change.



KEY ACTIVITIES – STATE MENTORS

Coalition members visited the following states to gather information about their processes:

- Delaware
- Iowa
- New Hampshire
- Oklahoma
- Washington



KEY ACTIVITIES – RESEARCH ANALYSIS

After obtaining information about existing efforts to improve employment and systems change in Kansas, this data will be analyzed with the professional consultation support of Lisa A. Mills, Ph.D.



KEY ACTIVITIES – RESEARCH ANALYSIS

Lisa is currently a consultant on disability employment policy and systems change working in 14 states under various contracts with state government agencies and federally funded initiatives. She has 25 years of experience in the field of disabilities with a primary focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



KEY ACTIVITIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

Kansas led the nation in establishing the first Employment First legislation committing to competitive, integrated employment as a priority outcome of publicly-funded services for people with disabilities. The legislation established an oversight and monitoring commission to set the goals and objectives for Employment First.



KEY ACTIVITIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

However, the Legislature took those powers away from that oversight commission. Kansas failed to establish a state-level, inter-agency body charged with ensuring full and coordinated implementation of the law.



KEY ACTIVITIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of this failure, there is not yet a comprehensive and coordinated effort within Kansas state government that can ensure needed energy and resources are being dedicated to the goal of improving employment outcomes for Kansans with disabilities.



KEY ACTIVITIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

While there is little opposition to the goals of Kansas' Employment First law and a great variety of initiatives across state government focusing on improving competitive, integrated employment outcomes, efforts have not led to real, measurable progress.



KEY ACTIVITIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

The Coalition aims to establish a comprehensive planning process that includes making recommendations in response to issues and needs presented by Kansans and through our constituency engagement process. These recommendations will represent proven strategies that have addressed the same or similar needs in other states.



KEY ACTIVITIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICY: Employment policies should have clear goals and expectations with outlined accountability.

- Leadership is a key component.
- Policies must be enforceable.
- Employment outcomes should be evidenced in state policy and practice.



KEY ACTIVITIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

FUNDING: Kansas should fund desired outcomes to increase competitive and integrated employment of people with disabilities and its budget should demonstrate its priorities.

- A flexible system that builds in long-term support is vital.
- Funding should incentivize services for competitive, integrated employment.



KEY ACTIVITIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

FUNDING (cont'd):

- Funding should be a priority in multiple systems, including Medicaid and VR.
- Competitive rates for services will increase employment outcomes and improve quality of services.



KEY ACTIVITIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

FUNDING (cont'd):

- Funding should include technical assistance and training for persons with disabilities and their families/natural supports, service providers, employers/businesses, etc.



KEY ACTIVITIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

SERVICES: High quality services should drive improved outcomes.

- Expectations should be clear among all department and service delivery systems.
- There should be consistent availability and continuity in services to obtain competitive and integrated employment throughout the state



KEY ACTIVITIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

SERVICES (cont'd):

- Quality enhancements and improvements should address stakeholder experiences.
- Flexible services with an array of options can create a custom solution to individual needs.
- Education and training regarding benefits should be provided for all stakeholders.



KEY ACTIVITIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

TRANSITION: Consistent and clear processes should create an effective bridge to adulthood.

- Education for youth, parents, teachers and other school personnel will create understanding.
- Coordination between state departments will ensure continuity.



KEY ACTIVITIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

TRANSITION (cont'd):

- Partnerships between schools and the community will ease transition challenges.



KEY ACTIVITIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

TRANSPORTATION: Transportation is a vital component of accessing employment opportunities.

- Availability (both urban and rural) must be addressed.
- Cost and accessibility must not prevent individuals from working.



KEY ACTIVITIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

TRANSPORTATION (cont'd):

- Partnerships (services and business, crossing over geographic and municipal areas, etc.) may ease challenges and create opportunities.



SUMMARY

SUMMARY

While many people and organizations are working to improve employment in our state, the strength of this approach is the use of professional consultation and national experts to weave together all of the important factors that will lead to the creation of a strong employment plan.



SUMMARY

ESCC will identify existing state efforts and needs, gather stakeholder feedback, review best-practices, provide technical assistance for training in best practices, and develop a recommended comprehensive plan to address employment needs, whether general or system-specific.



MEMBERS



COALITION MEMBERS

- Stephanie Breaker, Skills to Succeed
- Rick Cagan, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) - Kansas
- Rosie Cooper, Kansas Association of Centers for Independent Living (KACIL)
- Martha Hodgesmith, KU Research Center & Training on Independent Living (RTCIL)
- Shelia Nelson-Stout, OCCK
- Rocky Nichols, Disability Rights Center (DRC)



COALITION MEMBERS (CONT'D)

- James Quillen, OCCK
- Val Renault, KU Research Center & Training on Independent Living (RTCIL)
- Stephanie Sanford, Self-Advocate Coalition of Kansas (SACK)
- Jennifer Smith, Autism Society – The Heartland (ASH)
- Kelly Smith, Self-Advocate Coalition of Kansas (SACK)
- Kyle Kessler, Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas (ACMHCK)



PARTNERS



UNITED HEALTHCARE

The Coalition wishes to thank UHC for an outstanding commitment to employment outcomes in Kansas through the Empower Kansans Community Plan. This grant has funded this coalition's first-year efforts and is creating a significant catalyst in system's change for Kansas. Empower Kansans has funded three-years of employment projects in Kansas that will make a lasting impact on employment outcomes for Kansans with disabilities.



LISA MILLS

Lisa is currently working through the LEAD Center with the Kansas leadership in state government regarding employment issues, which uniquely positions her to be an effective partner in supporting focus groups and dialog regarding stakeholder feedback. Lisa will assist the coalition in policy issues and changes and communication with state leadership.



QUESTIONS?





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