Employment First Oversight Commission

2018 Recommendation Supplement

**Project Search**

Project SEARCH is an education and employment skills program for high school youth and adults with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) in their last year of high school eligibility or are currently eligible for day services at a participating provider. Project SEARCH interns are immersed in work environment at a host business site for three rotations across nine months. Project SEARCH was initially developed at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital and Medical Center.

* Kansas currently has 12 Project SEARCH sites in 8 different communities, including three adult sites. The Project SEARCH communities are:
* Salina; Lawrence; Johnson County; Wichita; Derby; Mulvane; El Dorado/Butler County; Newton; Hillsboro/Marion County.
* The Department of Commerce’s Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grant extends funding for the Johnson County Developmental Services (JCDS) sites and helps to establish a new adult site in Salina.
* There are currently three sites that have begun technical assistance with the National Project SEARCH to open programs.  One will be a hybrid serving students and young adults with Marion County Special Education Coop and Tabor College and one an adult program supported by Goodwill and Cintas in Wichita.  Two of these began offering services in the 2017-2018 school year.
* As of the 2015-2016 school year, Kansas has achieved a 78% success in positive outcomes resulting in employment for interns completing the program with eight sites recognized as achieving better than 70% employment awards at the 2017 international Project SEARCH conference.  One site received a 100% award, 4 received 80% award and 3 received 70% or better award.
* Project SEARCH is currently in its seventh year of implementation in Kansas.
* Technical support was funded by the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities (KCDD) until January2016.
* January 2016 LifeShare (a partner with Sunflower Health Plan) assumed the role of Statewide Coordinator for Project SEARCH.
* Sunflower provided financial support for 11 of the sites to attend the 2017 Project SEARCH conference in the Poconos
* A Statewide Steering committee was formed with representatives from each managed care organization (MCO), Department of Commerce, Kansas Department of Education (KSDE), KCDD and Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE.)

**Sedgwick County and Kansas City Business Leadership Networks (BLN)**

Peter Daniels, executive director of the Sedgwick County Business Leadership Network (SCBLN) responded to an EFOC inquiry on 12/16/2017 and reported that the SCBLN provided six lunch-and learn trainings (January through June) for area employers regarding employees dealing with mental health issues in the workplace. Attendance averaged 8-10 individuals from local employers at each session. Additionally, the Sedgwick County BLN sponsored two mixers for employers and disability providers, and provided support to the regional PROJECT SEARCH Business Advisory Council.

The Sedgwick County BLN has been a strong supporter of the Wichita Employment Nexus initiative, which began with a United Healthcare “Empowering Kansans” grant to the Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation in mid-2014. The SCBLN has continued to work closely with the Wichita Employment Nexus (modeled after the KC Employment Nexus) in bringing together employer and provider representatives monthly, and in supporting the work of the Kansas Department of Commerce -Wichita Workforce Center and its Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) efforts. The Wichita Employment Nexus reports that 59 individuals with disabilities made applications to Nexus-connected employers in 2017, with 6 applicants hired. Monthly Nexus meetings average 12-15 participants and over 30 employers and organizations regularly connect with the initiative. For the period September 2014 - October 2017, 38 individuals with disabilities were employed through the connections fostered by the Wichita Employment Nexus.

The Greater Kansas City BLN (GKCBLN) reported three major accomplishments:

1.    Through *KC@Work*, GKCBLN's initiative and collaboration with the Kansas City Employment Nexus (which serves both Johnson County, KS, and Jackson County, MO) and the MO and KS Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, 735 people with disabilities have secured employment in the last three years. From October 2016 through September 2017, 264 individuals with disabilities secured employment with 178 employers at an average wage of $10.28 per hour.

2.    GKCBLN hosted its 3rd Annual Disability Inclusion Summit in April 2017 at the KU Edwards Campus in Overland Park. The Summit provided an educational venue for 135 attendees from 72 companies and employment service providers to learn, network and increase disability inclusion in the workplace. Various professionals from the Wichita Employment Nexus have attended these conferences.

3.  GKCBLN hosted its 8th Annual Disability Champions Award Luncheon to publicly recognize companies for outstanding achievement in disability inclusion in their workplace. In recent years Kansas companies including Sprint, Cerner Corporation, Staples, and Sunflower Health Plan have been recognized.

**Developmental Disabilities Systems Change Grant**

The Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities (KCDD) contracted with Griffin Hammis Consulting group to develop a “Roadmap” to improve the employment outcomes for people with disabilities in Kansas. Kansas has fallen behind on employment in recent years and we need to implement a plan to address this issue. The Roadmap has been developed and KCDD is currently in the process of meeting with the administration on ways that the roadmap can be incorporated with the KanCare 2.0. Funding and support services need to change to support people in community jobs.

The KanCare 2.0 contains many of the recommendations from the Roadmap. We will continue to work with the administration on the new pilots and other improvements in the system. We are encouraging the state to pursue a 1915(i) state plan amendment to allow additional resources be made available to support employment activities.

The new Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act (WIOA) has created a great opportunity for the implementation of the road map. We continue to work with the transformer group to increase awareness and support people in accessing employment.

**Disability Employment Initiative (DEI)**

Kansas was awarded a second three-year Disability Employment Initiative grant in October 2014. The project goals include providing work-based and/or postsecondary technical education and training for up to 175 Kansans who have disabilities. A partnership with Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation, a non-profit organization in south central Kansas serving individuals with various disabilities was finalized to expand adapted computer skills training in Wichita and to develop the training and classroom space within the Prairie Band Potawatomie Nation, as well as a third site in Western Kansas. Commerce has also partnered with two school districts and community partners to establish Project SEARCH for adults in Salina and Johnson County. These internship programs, based on a work-based training model for serving high school students, were among the first Project SEARCH programs designed to serve adults. The initiative also seeks to improve individual employment outcomes through the use of Integrated Resource Teams (IRT), bringing together professionals from across the service-delivery spectrum to work together to resolve any barriers to employment experience by DEI participants. Three of the five Workforce Investment Areas hired a Disability Resource Coordinator to facilitate the implementation of the grant. These staff members not only coordinate IRTs, they also support Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other Workforce Center professionals as they serve job seekers with disabilities.

As of 6-30-17, the Kansas DEI has met or exceeded all project goals, resulting in the employment of 120 adults with disabilities at an average starting wage of $12.37 per hour. Moreover, the percentage of individuals with disabilities receiving services from the public workforce system has increased from 2.27% to 12.17%.

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2017 Updates

**Integrated Resource Teams**

The IRT approach has become such a success as standard operating procedure in the DEI participating areas that the DEI team is now being relied upon to guide training for replication throughout the state during WIOA implementation. This approach will be used as a model for the development of Service Guidance and Support Teams (SGST) to support customers who are experiencing multiple challenges in reaching their employment goal. Throughout the state, 106 IRTs have been developed to assist participants with employment preparation and placement.

**Outreach/WIOA Enrollment**

As a result of ongoing outreach, WIOA enrollment of people with disabilities statewide for calendar year 2017 has increased 491.48% compared to calendar year 2014. The actual number of individuals with disabilities enrolled in WIOA has increased to 462.

**SACT Microsoft Word Certification and Customer Service Training**

Training is ongoing in the School of Adaptive Computer Training at the Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation in Wichita. Training was provided to 81 students at three locations in the state during the grant period. All students who completed the training took the certification exam and earned the industry-recognized Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) credential in Microsoft Word.

**“Pathways for Success”** utilizes a curriculum developed by one of our Disability Resource Coordinators, in collaboration with a local mental health provider, to serve their clients with multiple barriers to employment who have a desire to work. Components of the project include discovery, customized employment and career exploration, resume writing, soft skills development, mock interviews, benefits counseling, asset development and the creation of integrated resource teams.

Due to the successful outcomes of this comprehensive program, other agencies as well as other local workforce regions have expressed an interest in implementing Pathways Projects.  One of the newest collaborative Pathways to Success efforts is with an identified I/DD provider in the same local workforce area.  The first Pathways to Success session with this I/DD group was conducted in the spring of 2017, another group started in October 2017.  Additionally, the Disability Resource Coordinators in Areas 1 and 4 are working collaboratively to conduct a regional Pathways to Success group in or around either Hutchinson or Newton.

**KDHE/MCO/Workforce DEI Pilot**

A collaborative pilot between the KDHE *Working Healthy* program, KanCare MCOs and two of the Kansas Workforce Centers Disability Employment Initiatives (DEI).  The pilot involves MCO Care Coordinators discussing employment with their members and referring those interested to the *Working Healthy* Program Coordinator.  After benefits counseling with a *Working Healthy* Benefits Specialist, members who confirm that they understand the process and are interested in finding employment are referred to the DEI in their region.  Once employed, the DEI refers to KDHE *Working Healthy,* who assist in applying the work incentives.   After the first few months of the pilot, the partners met to discuss revisions to the pilot process as the number of participants was low.  Partners identified a gap in transition and support in the initial process and discussed how to close this gap.   A referral/tracking/release form was developed to improve transition to each component of the process, and MCO Care Coordinators will now meet face-to-face with members and complete the forms.  These revisions are designed to focus team time and effort on those who are interested but unsure where to turn for support, help members to have a better understanding of the process, and provides a clearer process that promotes better use of existing services.

**Subcabinet on Disability/Disability Employment Workgroup**

At the direction of the Subcabinet on Disability, a Disability Employment Workgroup was initiated comprised of representatives from State agencies providing services for youth and adults with disabilities.  The purpose of the Workgroup is to coordinate their efforts to carry out the intent of the Employment First Act passed by the Kansas Legislature and signed by Governor Brownback in 2011.  The Disability Employment Workgroup developed, disseminated and compiled surveys to determine where agencies are in term of their implementation of Employment First, as well as the data available that provides agencies with baseline data regarding the numbers of individuals with disabilities who are employed.  Based on this data, the Workgroup presented the following to the Subcabinet on Disability at their October 2017 meeting: 1) the need to clarify the definitions of competitive and integrated employment, which programs and agencies are mandated to follow the requirements of the Employment First statute, and whether there is an expected outcome, either by amending the current law, through administrative regulation, or an executive order; 2) a review of the data obtained from the agency surveys; 3) the need for each State agency providing employment services to have an Employment First policy in place; and 4) have State agencies begin to develop Action Plans to define and address employment barriers.

**Executive Order 15-02 Employment practices for veterans and disabled individuals**

In 2015 Governor Brownback signed Executive Order 15-2 that set up a hiring preference for state agencies hiring veterans and people with disabilities. The means of determining disability and veterans’ status to qualify for the preference and an explanation of the preference and how it works were drafted and circulated for comment to the public and agency legal counsel in 2016 and early 2017. Work on computer programming was delayed because of pay initiatives and new SHARP-related projects. The earliest it could be operational is late January 2018.

**Kansas Bidders Preference Program**

During the 2012 Session, the Kansas Legislature enacted a Bidder Preference Program which created three (3) bid preferences:

* Bidder Preference #1:10% for a CERTIFIED BUSINESS [as defined in KSA 75-3740]
* Bidder Preference #2: Dollar for Dollar, up to 10%, for purchases from the State Use Vendor Program
* Bidder Preference #3: Dollar for Dollar, up to 10%, for purchases from a CERTIFIED BUSINESS

In 2016, two Kansas companies (Integrated Employment Enterprises in Ottawa and Business Technology Career Opportunities in Wichita) have become Certified Bidders Preference employers. Only Center Industries applied for the preference for Fiscal Year 2018. It is still being reviewed. Information about the Bidders Preference program is available at http://admin.ks.gov/offices/procurement-and-contracts/bidder-preference-program and about the Kansas State Use Vendor Program at <http://www.ksstateuse.org>.

**State Websites and Technology**

Information Technology Executive Committee (ITEC) Policy 1210 requires that websites and web applications are accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. In accordance with this policy, as agencies have brought forth their IT projects they have committed to ensuring that legacy IT systems with little or no accessibility are being replaced with more accessible systems with at least some supports. This ensures that employees with disabilities can do the essential functions of their jobs with or without reasonable accommodations. This includes both general government entities and the Regents, as well as contractors.

To assist in the evaluation the State of Kansas has obtained an Accessibility Management Platform to assess websites. We have been using the tool for agencies, employment portals and contracted websites for several years. This initiative is led by our Kansas Partnership for Accessible Technology, which is made up of persons with disabilities together with technology and governmental leaders.  Accessible IT is not only the law, but it is also our business philosophy.

**Federal Contractor/Subcontractor Expectations (Department of Labor regulations implementing Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, at 41 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 60-741)**

The U.S. Department of Labor/Office of Federal Contractor Compliance Program in Kansas City reports that compliance visits to federal contractors in Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Iowa were continuing. These companies are expected to show good-faith efforts to increase their employment of individuals with disabilities to a total 7% of their workforce. No federal travel funding or staff time is currently available for making presentations. DOL/OFCCP staff can be contacted to provide online webinars on this topic in 2018.

**Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) Employment Services and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) GOALS program**

Since Kansas implemented strong work cooperation requirements for TANF (cash assistance) clients, 41,158 new employments were reported for TANF clients (from January 2011 through November 2016). In November 2016, 493 new employments were reported at an average wage of $9.81 an hour (range was $8.66 to $11.25 an hour), and 30.91 hours a week (range was from 29 to 33.48 hours a week).

GOALS is a three-year, $13.5 million pilot project designed to set eligible Kansans receiving food assistance on a path to successful careers that pay living wages, offer advancement opportunities and restore their sense of value to themselves, their families and communities. GOALS is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as one of 10 pilot projects in the nation designed to develop and test innovative employment and training strategies.

Over the three-year pilot, approximately 4,000 food assistance recipients will take part in the pilot. Two-thousand recipients will be randomly assigned to receive intensive, individualized services in 36 counties (two urban and two rural areas of the state). An additional 2,000 food assistance recipients will be part of a control group who will receive basic Employment & Training (E&T) services in 27 of those counties. Since the pilot began Jan. 25, 2016, 2,220 food assistance recipients have been randomly assigned (as of February 13, 2017).

**End-Dependence Kansas**

End-Dependence Kansas is a significant initiative to increase employment of Kansans with disabilities. The State has invested in this initiative to strengthen and increase the capacity of community partners to provide evidence-based and promising employment services. As a result of this initiative, it is projected that at least 2,000 Kansans with disabilities will achieve employment and increased self-reliance in the first five years.

Five state agencies are collaborating to implement End-Dependence Kansas. They include the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF), the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services, the Kansas Department of Commerce, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and the Kansas Department of Corrections. Each of the five agencies has senior-level staff who serve on the End-Dependence Kansas oversight panel to ensure policy alignment, sustainability and accountability. DCF’s Rehabilitation Services (RS) will serve as the lead agency.

End-Dependence Kansas serves all disabilities, with a targeted effort for:

* Youth with disabilities transitioning from high school to employment
* Individuals interested in employment as an alternative to Social Security or other benefit programs
* Persons with disabilities exiting Kansas correctional facilities
* Persons with limited or no work experience
* Persons being served or pursuing services through Home and Community Based Services Medicaid waivers.

The evidence-based and promising practices selected for this initiative are:

* Individual Placement and Support
* Individualized Discovery/Customized Employment
* Vermont Progressive Employment

A significant goal of End-Dependence Kansas is to promote sustainable systems change to improve the quality and quantity of employment outcomes. End-Dependence Kansas will emphasize and support community partners to prioritize competitive, integrated jobs in the community rather than sheltered employment, non-work day activities or other more segregated services.

To implement this initiative, RS is pleased to partner with Public Consulting Group (PCG) to provide Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation. In addition, RS has 15 performance-based contracts with community partners to provide direct consumer services. These contracts were established through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process.

EDK is actively serving 426 consumers through the 14 contractors. The 2nd Annual EDK Training and Technical Assistance conference was held in Topeka, Kansas in September 2017. This year, 147 contractor employees and 50 vocational rehabilitation counselors have been immersed in the three employment services models being implemented in the EDK project.

An example of improved system support and performance as a result of the EDK initiative is the effort to create an expeditated process for applications leading to determination of eligibility and completion of the individual plan for employment. In partnership with the 14 EDK contractors, the VR program staff have been successful in decreasing the average days required to determine a person eligible for the VR program and completing their individual plan for employment. By reducing the required numbers of days for these two requirements, the consumer is able to receive their first services in about half the time as the general VR program. As this continues to be measured and monitored, the learning from the EDK initiative will inform improved strategies for the way VR contracted service providers, community organizations and consumers themselves can work together with the VR program staff to gather and submit the necessary information required to determine eligibility, and to empower the VR counselor to determine eligibility, identify functional limitations and complete the initial IPE in no more than one or two meetings.

To date, 58 consumers have been placed in integrated, competitive employment. The average hourly rate of pay is $9.73 (approximately $2.50 higher than the current minimum wage). EDK consumers that have become employed represent a cross section of Kansans with varied disabilities, age groups, work histories, correctional involvements and those whose skills, talents, abilities and contributions to the workforce might otherwise have been left behind. EDK continues forward, and contractors implementing these 3 employment services and supports models are demonstrating that even those people with the most significant disabilities, who want to work, can.

***Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)***

Empowering students with disabilities to become successful and self-reliant adults is the goal of a new program being implemented by Rehabilitation Services (RS) in the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF). The program, Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) assists secondary students with disabilities to bridge the gap between being a student in high school, to the adult world of post-secondary education, work and/or independent living. Pre-ETS is established as a new mandated service under Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), otherwise known as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The Rehabilitation Act governs the Vocational Rehabilitation program, as well as Centers for Independent Living, state independent living services, state supported employment programs and other programs specific to disability services and supports. Pre-ETS is a new requirement and is funded by a mandated set-aside of 15% of the annual federal formula grant for the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

To be eligible to participate in Pre-ETS services and activities a secondary education student must be at least 16 years old, have an individual education plan due to disability, has an approved 504 plan or is eligible for a 504 because they meet the definition of a person with a disability. The 5 Pre-ETS services required to be available statewide are: paid work experiences, job exploration counseling, self-advocacy training, workplace readiness training, and counseling on post-secondary education opportunities that lead to employment.

To fully implement Pre-ETS services Rehabilitation Services established 25 new positions to plan, implement and provide the required services statewide. The Pre-ETS staff began their efforts to network with the local school districts and special education coops. The Pre-ETS leadership along with RS and DCF leadership conducted outreach efforts to potential partners interested in working alongside the Pre-ETS staff to deliver some or all of the 5 required Pre-ETS services. Collaborative relationships have been forged between the RS Pre-ETS personnel and local school districts, special education coops, independent living centers, local workforce development boards and their one-stop networks, and other agencies with requirements under WIOA to who work with students and youth with disabilities. RS entered into service provider agreements for employment readiness training, self-advocacy education, counseling on post-secondary education opportunities and paid work experiences across Kansas. Additionally, Pre-ETS has engaged the Kansas Youth Empowerment Academy to conduct 10 Empower Me workshops in different communities throughout Kansas to Pre-ETS eligible students.

As of this writing, the Pre-ETS staff are currently providing one or more of the 5 required services to 450 students with disabilities across Kansas. Through a service provider agreement, KRS provides funds for training, job development and follow-along services provided by the workforce center staff and centers for independent living. Pre-ETS has currently made approximately 90 referrals to providers for the paid work-based learning experiences. The Pre-ETS staff continue to make connections in schools, community-based organizations, parent organizations and other organizations and events to invite students with disabilities, their families and support networks to consider the benefits of participation in Pre-ETS services to improve the transition experience for students with disabilities from high school to adulthood.

**Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services Behavioral Health Services**

**Enhancing Supported Employment in Kansas Grant** (Individual Placement and Support Supported Employment)

The Enhancing Supported Employment Cooperative Agreement was awarded to the State of Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) in 2014. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) award was for $3,999,760.00. Kansas is in the third year of this five-year grant. Services have been provided to 226 persons between 10/1/2014-9/30/2016. Sub-grantee sites are Compass who serves (Finney, Ford, Grant, Gray, Greeley, Hamilton, Hodgeman, Kearney, Lane, Morton, Scott, Stanton and Wichita Counties) and COMCARE who is serving Sedgwick County.

**About Individual Placement and Support (IPS)**

IPS supported employment helps people living with behavioral health conditions work at regular jobs of their choosing. Although variations of supported employment exist, IPS refers to the evidence-based practice of supported employment. Mainstream education and technical training are included to advance career paths.

Cooperative Agreements to Benefit Homeless Individuals (CABHI) - The CABHI-States program is jointly funded by SAMHSA’S-CMHS (Center for Mental Health Services) and CSAT (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment) to enhance or develop the infrastructure of states and their service systems to increase capacity to provide accessible, effective, comprehensive, coordinated/integrated, and evidence-based treatment services; permanent supportive housing; peer supports; and other critical services to veterans who experience homelessness or chronic homelessness, and other individuals (non-veterans) who experience chronic homelessness with SMI or substance use disorders or co-occurring mental and substance use disorders. The grant award was for $5,035,984. The sub-grantee sites are Wyandot Center (Wyandotte), Valeo (Shawnee), Mental Health Association (MHA) (Sedgwick), Regional Alcohol and Drug Assessment Center (RADAC) (State). Individuals served between September 28, 2015 to September 28, 2016 were 134.

**Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH)**

SAMHSA’s PATH program provides services for people with serious mental illness (SMI) experiencing homelessness. It is a formula grant authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Amendments Act of 1990. The PATH Program, is the first major federal legislative response to homelessness, and it is administered by the SAMHSA Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS). The award was for $377,000.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) is a program designed to increase access to SSI/SSDI for *eligible adults\* who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness\*\** and have a mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder.

KDADS CABHI grant teams AND Supported Employment IPS sites have SOAR trained Employment Specialist to assist disabled homeless consumers in accessing federal entitlement benefits and are the connecting liaisons to the federal entitlement programs like Ticket To Work, Medicaid/Medicare.

**Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Settings Rule Transition Planning**

Under the new Home- and Community-Based Setting (HCBS) rule, the settings that individuals on Medicaid (KanCare) HCBS programs live in mustbe integrated into the greater community and must support full access for individuals to community resources, including opportunities to seek employment and work in competitive integrated settings, engage in community life, control personal resources, and receive services in the community, to the same degree of access as individuals not receiving Medicaid HCBS.

This HCBS rule is in complete alignment with the Kansas Employment First Law. Kansas Department on Disability and Aging has held several meetings with stakeholders and providers obtaining input from a variety of sources.  This project will continue to evolve as we develop better transition plans overtime.  KDADS will be in complete compliance by the federal deadline of March 2022.

**Initiatives of Managed Care Companies under KanCare**

The United Healthcare effort “Active Living, Better Health & Employment Through Technology” conducted by Assistive Technology for Kansans, a program coordinated by the University of Kansas, resulted in 75 individuals who have disabilities developing basic technology skills. 72 of the 75 participants completed the skills portion of the workshop curriculum and acquired personal technology to support their employment and increase their health.

Participants reported a broad range of disabilities-26 participants with Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome/other mental health, 14 with orthotic conditions or spinal cord injuries, 10 with traumatic brain injury, 25 with intellectual disabilities, 14 participants with health conditions, and 4 participants were legally blind or deaf. Participants completed four intensive workshops customized to their personal employment and health goals in addition to completing outside class activities. All participants completed a minimum of one employment-related goal and one mental health or health goal.

Thirty-four of the 73 participants are now employed. 10 individuals are employed full-time, 24 are employed part-time, and 13 individuals had interviews scheduled at the time the data was collected. 3 individuals reported obtaining full time-jobs but lost those positions within 3 months of hire. Two of these individuals reported the jobs were too stressful; and one reported physical health issues interfered with job performance**.** Customized computer skills training, attention to individual employment and health goals, and provision of personal technology can result in increased employment and better health.

**Transition Transformation Workgroup**

In early 2016, a group of professionals from multiple state and local agencies began a discussion of the needs of young people with disabilities transitioning out of high school. As local school districts dismantle transition services and as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act places additional requirements on the broader state workforce partnership to assist students and families with transition services, the group decided to form a coalition to address these and other issues.

As an *Employment First* state, Kansas’ priority is for youth and young adults with disabilities to transition into employment. The Transformers Coalition - a coalition of state agencies, nonprofits, and other interested parties - are conducting a series of Town Hall meetings across the state to identify successes and challenges youth and young adults with disabilities experience during their transition to employment. Youth, young adults, family members, community members, educators, providers and other professionals are encouraged to attend one of seven community meetings in early 2017. Information from town hall meetings will be used to prepare a statewide resource guide and to design sessions for a future-dated Kansas Transition Conference.

The Transformers Coalition conducted Town Hall meetings in Kansas City, Topeka, Salina, Hays, Garden City, Pratt, Wichita, and Girard to identify successes and challenges youth and young adults with disabilities experience during their transition to employment. Overall youth, young adults, family members, community members, educators, providers and other professionals told us the following:

1. *Lack of knowledge about current available resources and how to access them, including understanding the laws/regulations that direct each service*
2. *Lack of connected and coordinated resources and/or ability to cooperatively work together*
3. *Lack of peer mentor support and individualized advocacy*

The Transformer Coalition is in the process of developing partnerships to create opportunities to resolve those issues.

**Department of Corrections**

Summary of job services provided by KDOC/partners to offenders with developmental disabilities:  All offenders have access to an array of job services, in the measure they are able to use them, including GED readiness, vocational training, special education (through contract providers); job readiness groups where skills for job search and retention are taught; resource rooms with access to apply for jobs, prepare resumes, mock interviews, and one-on-one job search and retention planning; partnerships with workforce centers statewide, including skills training, job placement and job training programs; private industry and correctional industry jobs to gain skills; and work release programs to promote employment pre-release; partnerships with the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and Federal Bonding program managers at Commerce, with offenders screened pre-release and certified when eligible.  In addition:

·         Vocational Rehabilitation staff have cross trained with KDOC staff in interventions and strategies to help offenders with disabilities gain employment.  For several years we have collaborated with VR, and they work with us to identify offenders eligible for their services pre-release, and get them connected so they can walk into the services at release.  At times this has included VR staff going into or calling into facilities pre-release to be prepared to work with the offender upon release.

·         The End Dependence Kansas (EDK) program is managed in Area 1 by the LWIB, Workforce One, which specifically targets offenders with disabilities for workforce development services.  They are able to offer education, training, on the job training, and other services, pre-and post-release.  In addition, another EDK provider, Mind Matters, is working with Johnson and Wyandotte counties parole offices to connect with offenders with disabilities so they can receive their services post-release.

·         In Wichita Parole every Wednesday there is a group geared towards persons with disabilities who are job searching, where information is provided about the services available through DCF VR services, and the offenders are linked to those services.

·         Through our partnerships with community mental health centers, in some jurisdictions they offer supported employment programs for persons with mental health disabilities; we partner with those organizations to access those services for eligible offenders.

**Kansas State Department of Education**

The Kansas State Board of Education launched a powerful new vision for education – Kansas leads the world in the success of each student. This vision challenges the state to rethink its education system to address the needs of the whole child; both academic and non-academic. To measure its progress toward achieving this vision, the board has established five outcome areas: Social-emotional growth measured locally, kindergarten readiness, Individual Plan of Study focused on career interest, high school graduation and postsecondary success.

An important component of the state’s vision for education is workforce readiness; ensuring that each student graduates high school with the academic preparation, cognitive preparation, technical skills, employability skills and civic engagement to be successful in postsecondary education, in the attainment of an industry recognized certification or in the workforce, without the need for remediation. Schools will focus on providing internships and job shadowing opportunities to students. As schools begin implementing these programs, the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) will monitor district practices in planning for and providing appropriate transition services to students with disabilities, and assuring that KSDE-developed resources and materials encourage Employment First policy.

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Implementation and Planning**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act became effective in mid-2014. States were given two years to implement the new law which, like its predecessor, the Workforce Investment Act, funds traditional workforce services through four separate programs: Adult Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program and Wagner-Peyser Labor Exchange. Nearly all of the Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth funds are allocated by statutory formula to Local Workforce Development Boards for direct service delivery to eligible individuals per the requirements of the Act. Kansas is divided into five Local Workforce Development Areas, each overseen by a separate Local Board and guided by the state Workforce Development Board comprised of individuals appointed by the Governor.

WIOA also requires State Workforce Agencies to partner with other State Agencies which administer Vocational Rehabilitation and Adult Education. WIOA requires all of these partners to submit a collaborative strategic four-year plan, approved by the state Workforce Board, describing how WIOA will be implemented in Kansas within the provisions and limitations of the law. In October 2014, Commerce convened the Core Partners (Workforce Services, Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation) and other partners, establishing the State Plan Management Team to develop the WIOA State Plan. The plan was submitted to the US Departments of Labor and Education and was approved in October 2016. The state is required to modify its plan by July 1, 2018 and will begin the process to update its plan in early 2018.

**WIOA Youth Program**

WIOA youth projects support a collaborative and integrated service delivery system to provide high quality services to in-school and out-of-school youth and young adults (ages 14 – 24). In each of the five local areas, WIOA-eligible youth are assisted through career exploration and guidance, continued support for educational attainment, opportunities for skills training in in-demand industries and occupations, and culminating with a good job along a career pathway or enrollment in post-secondary education.

**WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs**

Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs provide training and other assistance to individuals age 18 and over who are experiencing job loss or lay off, disability, poverty, lack of in-demand job skills or other significant barriers to employment. Local Workforce Development Boards determine eligibility, develop a career plan and support these individuals as they obtain postsecondary or other training leading to employment.

**Employment Systems Change Coalition’s Engagement Process**

The Employment Systems Change (ESC) Coalition of Kansas has been conducting a systematic effort to obtain information that will hopefully lead to helping to improve employment outcomes for Kansans with disabilities.  This effort has included but not been limited to the following:

***(a) Site Visits to Examine Best Practices and Promising Initiatives in Other States***

The ESC Coalition sent small delegations of its members and conducted on-site visits in Delaware, Iowa, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, and Washington state.  The ESC delegations met with state agency heads, state employees, program managers, advocates, stakeholders and decision makers in these states to learn about each state’s promising and best practices.

***(b) Engaging Kansas Stakeholders through Focus Groups***

The ESC Coalition held nearly 20 focus groups throughout Kansas for providers, natural supports and people with disabilities to provide input about employment barriers, opportunities, programs, etc.  Hundreds of individuals participated in these focus group sessions.

***(c) Online Survey***

The ESC Coalition conducted an extensive online survey regarding employment issues for Kansans with disabilities.  Nearly 1700 Kansans took the survey, including 480 individuals with disabilities, 520 parent/family members of an individual with a disability, 89 legal guardians of an individual with a disability, 17 educational advocates for a student with an IEP, 442 employees of a disability service provider, and 134 state employees.  The survey was dynamic and tailored to the specific experiences of the individuals taking the survey (ex: those of transition age were asked questions regarding post-secondary transition, those receiving SSI were asked about their knowledge of maintaining benefits, working and their SSI check, etc.).  As respondents answered questions, follow up questions allowed the respondents to drill down and provide further detailed information about their life experiences.

***(d) Final Report***

The results of the site visits, focus groups and online survey are currently being processed by the members of the ESC Coalition, and a final report regarding this effort with recommendations will be issued soon (targeted completion date in 2018).

***The ESC Coalition membership included:****National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Kansas, Skills to Succeed, the University of Kansas Research and Training Center on Independent Living (RTC/IL), the Self-Advocate Coalition of Kansas (SACK), Kansas Association of Centers for Independent Living (KACIL), Interhab (represented through participation of OCCK), Disability Rights Center of Kansas, the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, the Autism Society - The Heartland.*

**KDHE KanCare 2.0 Proposed Employment Initiatives**

In response to stakeholder input, KDHE has included in their 1115 Waiver renewal a package of services such as supported employment, independent living skills training, personal assistance and transportation designed to provide an option for individuals with disabilities and behavioral health conditions who want to pursue competitive, integrated employment.  KDHE also included an optional diversion program for MediKan beneficiaries, offering expanded health care, social service and employment supports in order to assist these individuals to become employed and avoid long-term reliance on Social Security disability benefits