

Supported Employment Workgroup – Meeting #1

9:00 – 11:00 AM
July 12, 2023

Meeting Attendance

Organization	Representatives
WSU CEI	Carri McMahon
Cottonwood CDDO	Angela Levy
Johnson County Developmental Supports	Angeline Anderson
Starkey	Becca Manahan
N/A	Beth Orth
Sunflower	Cheryl Laaker
Self Advocate Coalition of KS	Colin Olenick
Mosaic	Denise Thomas
KU Center on Developmental Disabilities	Evan Dean
KDADS	Mark Dietzler
N/A	Lisa Mills PhD
Disability Rights Center	Mike Burgess
KDADS	Mitzie Tyree
Cottonwood	Phil Bentzinger
N/A	Stephanie Coleman

Welcome/Introduction

Agreements Suggested:

The group added the following to the suggested agreements:

- Be respectful even if you disagree
- Focus on the waiver(s) for this workgroup's effort.
There are no stupid questions so ask. We come from a diverse background with different exposures.

Workgroup Background

Mitzie & Carri shared information about the workgroup background and formation process.

Questions from the workgroup:

- (Comment) I think the first come for serve aspect of selecting group members was probably not the most productive way to get most experienced folks together.

Purpose & Resources

Carri shared information about this specific group’s purpose and the resources provided and reviewed the regulation language together.

Discussion

What does work about Supported Employment in Kansas now?	What doesn't work about Supported Employment in Kansas now?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job market is good • Recent legislation that provides tax breaks for employers (up to 50% of wages up to \$15/hr) • Pockets where supported employment is working <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Because of how those providers interpret billing guidance (+1) • Braiding of services • Providers are offering despite barriers • Pre-ETS with VR is working • Work based summer learning (two locations) • Project Search 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambiguity between what VR & KDADS pay for – VR doesn't pay for discovery, would be good to add to Waiver • Fewer programs, providers than in the past, less funding/training • Gap between VR and HCBS access • Rate is low – impacts staffing (+1) • People work themselves off services/off the waiver = disincentivizes offering service • Confusion about what service is, what's allowable • Communication when braiding services • Provider credentialing isn't worth effort for reimbursement rate • Lack of long term job support • Lack of awareness of employment as a service option. Covered in school, but not emphasized when transition to Waiver, not covered in PCP process • Braiding of services

What do you want Supported Employment Services to do for Kansans?

- Employees and employers feel supported
- Support individuals to live their best life by giving them purpose and a sense of value. Encourage independence and self value.
- Help all Kansans no matter their ability or level of support needed find employment.
- Services start early – in school. Opportunity for people to explore interests, what they're good at, what they want to do. Continued support after school

- Supported employment is the standard services, not the exception.
- Career development – ABC – any job, better job, career
- Families encourage and support their children to work and pursue goals.

What do you like about what other states offer?

- Reimburse per hour the person works.
- Group supported employment.
- Ongoing job support – maintenance & growth support
- Innovation other states have – assistive technology.
- Job coaching and training from a natural support

What are the barriers to using supported employment now?

- Ambiguity in service definition
- Reimbursement rate
- Lack of providers (perhaps due to the items above)
- Transportation
 - I liked that transportation was included in the service description in at least one of the states KDADS looked into.
 - This might be a key barrier – Johnson County has good transportation and it's still a problem (+2)
- Having to request units of service, conflict with MCOs about the amount of service.
 - Ambiguity in service definition language
- End goal - Policy that works to achieve good outcomes.
- Clarify exception process for HCBS access – what is required.
- If SE rates are adjusted, will capitation rates be impacted? If not (or even if the capitation rates are increased), how can state incentivize MCOs to focus on increasing competitive integrated employment outcomes? Suggest looking at other managed care states' approaches including Pay-for-Performance.
- Supporting individuals not just when a supervisor changes but keeping in contact with them about wanting to move jobs within company or help going after a position within a company.

What else should KDADS keep in mind?

- Provider transformation opportunities – supporting providers to make transition to providing more employment focused services.
- Make sure have safeguards to ensure people are progressing to true integrated, competitive employment.

Other resources that would be helpful?

- Employment First slides
- Steven Hall roadmap to employment

Wrap Up

Things to do prior to the next meeting:

- Mitzie & Mark will see whether the Employment First slides can be shared with the group.
- Carri will add the Steven Hall Roadmap to Employment to the workgroups resource documents.

Next meeting:

- Carri will send a Doodle Poll to help find a date for the next meeting.

Supported Employment Workgroup – Meeting #2

3:00 – 5:00 PM
August 17, 2023

Meeting Attendance

Organization	Representatives
WSU CEI	Carri McMahon
WSU CEI	Lisa Jones
Cottonwood CDDO	Angela Levy
Johnson County Developmental Supports	Angeline Anderson
Starkey	Becca Manahan
N/A	Beth Orth
Sunflower	Cheryl Laaker
Self Advocate Coalition of KS	Colin Olenick
KDADS	Mark Dietzler
Disability Rights Center	Mike Burgess
KDADS	Mitzie Tyree
Cottonwood	Phil Bentzinger
N/A	Stephanie Coleman
Helpers, Inc.	Rebecca Gurera

Welcome/Introduction

Introductions followed by a brief recap of our previous meeting

Discussion

The group reviewed and discussed the online feedback report discussing reactions to the input.

- Reactions to SE Input Document (Online feedback)
 - Need to be training/expectations to those providing services.
 - Reflection of deterioration of our systems. Lack of funding, providers quitting, etc. Funding was lost, outcome-based model fell short of funding for the work that it takes and programs were dropped. Then bundled into day services, but hasn't been adequate.
 - Waiver is backwards (more independent is less financially beneficial for providers)
 - Families don't even know about the services
 - VR (Vocational Rehabilitation) was never designed to serve this expense level of population. Constant struggle to push VR to serve this population.
 - Not seeing same resources

- Workforce innovation and opportunity investment act
- Like the idea of OT usage (is a possibility if brought to as something that would help the individual determining. Could be pushed through.)
- Possibility of having OT students get coordinated with? Not sure what this would look like, but the idea of it. (Medicaid pays for OTs through schools. Blending resources?)
- A lot of confusion around SE. Lack of information/awareness, mis-information – especially in schools.
- There are parts of the state where are no/few providers. (Talking with MCOs about what they can provide.)
- Funding is a make/break for the programs
- Participants desire more than just entry level jobs. They want to go to college and have higher education, vocational training so they can be where they desire as a consumer rather than just meeting requirements and having services end. It's more than just employment – it's education. Also, to allow participants to get off some waivers and save money down the road.
- Incentivizing outcomes
- There is a lot of rebuilding to be done.

The group then focused their discussion on barriers to supported employment and possible resolutions.

- What are the barriers to using supported employment now?
 - Service definition/what is billable/interpretation
 - Rate
 - Lack of providers
 - Transportation
 - Clarify exception process for HCBS access (from VR) – what is required
 - Long term support (Supporting individuals not just when a supervisor changes but keeping in contact with them about wanting to move jobs within company or help going after a position within a company.)
 - Lack of knowledge of program & low expectations
 - Benefits planning/employment myths
 - Transitional age/system issues (in schools)
 - Length of waiting list
- Of these barriers - Which are within KDADS power to control/directly change? (first three identified below were discussed in small groups)
 - Service definition/what is billable/interpretation
 - Lack of knowledge of program & low expectations
 - employment myths

Comment: Service definition and rate will solve several other issues

- For these three barriers, what should KDADS do? What are the first things KDADS should pay attention to?

- Lack of knowledge of program & low expectations
 - Make sure teachers know what the resources are for individuals
 - Foster higher expectations thru teachers to be passed onto parents, instead of limitations.
 - Trainings for families (SAC and Families collaboration)
 - Information comes in overwhelming amounts – is there a way to break it out or send out systematically? To be better utilized.
 - Is there an app (or create one) that has resources/check lists.
 - Targeted case managers need more universal/uniform training.
 - Family navigators (to spend first 6 months with family to help understand new journey and opportunities) Similar to community health workers. Then “hand-off” to next person/group to help.
 - Have CC at MCOs talk about employment versus only around medical model
 - Work more with the existing partners. Training is something that can be done now. Consistency with training of current resources – providers, teachers, etc.
 - Also, regional transition councils.

 - Service definition/what is billable/interpretation
 - Provide consistent interpretation of current waiver. (Getting different guidance from different people.)
 - Look ahead to include discovery and exploration services
 - Career advancement

 - employment myths (was not discussed, due to no one selecting in to the group)
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- Clarify exception process for HCBS access (from VR) – what is required
 - Rate (recommendations of what they should be)
 - Lack of providers
 - Long term support (Including: Supporting individuals not just when a supervisor changes but keeping in contact with them about wanting to move jobs within company or help going after a position within a company. Facilitating skill development opportunities & increasing responsibilities for people served in support of job retention, career development, & increased earnings on the job, as well as continuing to offer support and resources to employers to strengthen and expanded our partnerships.)

Wrap Up

Things to do prior to the next meeting:

- N/a

Next meeting:

- Carri will send a Doodle Poll to help find a date for the next meeting.

Discussion items:

- Clarify exception process for HCBS access (from VR) – what is required
- Rate (recommendations of what they should be)
- Lack of providers
- Long term support (Supporting individuals not just when a supervisor changes but keeping in contact with them about wanting to move jobs within company or help going after a position within a company.)

Supported Employment Workgroup – Meeting #3

9:00 – 11:00 a.m.
September 13, 2023

Organization	Representatives
WSU	Carri McMahon, Lisa Jones
KDADS	Mitzie Tyree, Mark Dietzler
CDDO	Angela Levy
Provider	Becca Manahan, Phil Bentzinger, Angeline Anderson, Denise Thomas
Person Served/Family Member	Colin Olenick, Beth Orth
Advocate	Evan Dean, Mike Burgess,

Updates:

KDADS updates: They are/will be meeting with local school districts to determine their current transition services and how it can enhance their 504 IEPs. Also working with employment transition services.

Questions from group:

Question: can you clarify the OT student suggestions made it last meeting?

Answered: It was suggested that OTs would be helpful in providing help with job skills for those transitioning, and suggestion to explore partnering with an OT school/program to provide OT services.

The group discussed having trouble finding a way to bill and have the for employment PT/OT wages covered. Seems to be the only option to have the provider cover it, which shouldn't be the case. Neither billing waiver or MCO has been successful. (KDADS is requesting those with these issues to report back to them which MCOs are not covering PT/OT services for employment so it can be followed up on.)

Resource: Evan shared a related article in the chat, Carri will send it to the group with the meeting notes.

Discussion:

Prior to the meeting, participants were asked to tell what barriers to Supported Employment they wanted to discuss today. Barriers were identified in the last workgroup meeting. Topics prioritized were:

- The Waiver exception process (to gain access to the IDD Waiver when successfully exiting VR programs),
- Long-term support (Supporting individuals not just when a supervisor changes but keeping in contact with them about wanting to move jobs within company or help going after a position within a company)

Time allowed for more discussion, participants again broke into small groups to discuss these barriers:

- Benefit planning & Myths
- Lack of Knowledge about SE
- Rate

Each topic was discussed in small groups who then reported back to the full group and participants not a part of the small group discussion were invited to ask questions and share additional thoughts.

The Waiver exception process

What should KDADS do for the exception process?

KDADS has specific contract/policy language on how to access that exception– KDADS frequently requests information above and beyond requirements in the policy. It begins to feel not doable. (Example: asking an employer to write statement saying employee would be terminated if they didn't have long-term job coaching support – which is not fair to employer.) Inconsistencies on what is approved and what is not. If KDADS would follow the contract language and policy language on what is required for approval (VR successful case closure letter). Would stop being a barrier to people seeking the exception. Also - when approved, there is a gap when VR closes and when HCBS gets approved and then started. VR is writing extended service plan – more helpful if KDADS could make VR exception process closer to how it works when children are coming out of custody, KDADS issues a preliminary approval for funding. Then final 3160. If we know a case closure is coming up, a funding request can be sent to get preliminary approval and then once that VR case closure letter is completed, then KDADS do the 3160 to make transition more seamless, without gap in service.

What should KDADS pay attention to first?

From group: What is being approved/denied and if it is in line with their own policy. Just follow the policy.

Added from others not in group: It would be helpful if VR would be on board. Difficulty getting VR cases referred as supported employment cases. Shouldn't have to debate if VR needs/qualifies for supported employment.

KDADS: All of these are on KDADS radar. With having VR being on board – they are hoping that starting with transitional age in school and with all the partnerships created for the Employment First initiative that it will make this as streamlined as possible. Taking from school all the way to VR to supported employment/finding provider.

Comment to KDADS: Please make sure that is communicated to those who are making the decisions. VR needs to relay these messages from admin all the way down to the counselors because that is where some of those decisions are made.

How to replicate the success some providers have had in this area?

Reading the RSA definition of supported employment to them – anyone with IDD qualifies for VR supported employment services vs standard services. It should be a certified counselor making the decision. Not so much a “choice” of the person served as to whether they fit the definition or not. Choice is great – but it doesn’t make sense here. You have to get the providers the resources they need – and SE pays some extra components that are necessary. It is not just new VR counselors that are having trouble with this. Regional management seems to be wanting to pay as little as possible in every case, in every scenario. Also having trouble with VR cases that are moved to different offices – there are relationships that are built with VR counselor and judgement is trusted and then once moved to an office where those pre-existing relationships are not there, to be trusted for what they are saying is needed to be successful is very challenging.

Could be a topic for state rehabilitation council (Mike Burgess is on) and client assistance program to advocate for VR clients. Take it to VR first, but could eventually be a topic in the other (aforementioned) areas.

KDADS response: We do want to get a group for this issue, but we really want to get our contractor on. We were hoping to announce contractor by Friday so they can get going, as the list is only getting longer. But we have this idea down on the list to talk about.

Other discussion on exception process:

Seems like extra scrutiny has to do with the amount of reserve capacity that is outlined on the waiver – how many slots are available. Should it be increased when waiver is made? Feels like they are watching numbers more closely on waiver and that could be causing denials. (Summary: If the waiver is close to capacity, there will be more denials, in theory.)

KDADS: there is money for those services it is an expectation when figuring rates. It shouldn’t be a funding issue as much as a capacity issues. Will keep both on the list. We don’t want supported employment to be considered a “crisis” for us claiming to be an employment-first state.

(Reserve Capacity starts on page 30 of the Waiver Application. Appendix B Section C.)

Long-term supports for those employed

Long-term, on-going supported employment – there shouldn't be a deadline. The majority of those on it won't "work off" the waiver. Employment plan with goals – with supports for employer and employee. Range of services – job coaching, job-site on-site support.

KDADS: When evolving to person-centered model, you can stay within lines of policy and meet the person's needs in a more creative way. 30 years ago, the goal was to work yourself out of a job. The hope is that they make the relationships with employer and make natural supports – the kind of culture they want to create.

Comment to KDADS: Entry level jobs/coworkers (were many SE persons served work) are generally teenagers or those who aren't necessarily capable of giving that type of support. (Myth of "natural" supports. There is too much turnover & inconsistency in the workplace & culture of.) If we can't even get VR to establish the culture – how do we expect to create that culture within employers? VR to SE – should be higher-level needs cases that will be more on-going, even to the point of maintenance. But the service should still stay active. If there are cases where they worked-off how easy would it be to get back on/reactivate if the culture or job changed and services were needed again? Let's not rush the end-game – that doesn't feel like that serves the individuals needs. (KDADS will keep these concerns on the forefront)

Comment: Other states have been trying to pay co-workers to provide natural supports and it puts them in a very difficult position to advocate for someone against your own employer (similar to TCM issue). Not recommended. What keeps people in jobs is a third party to go to for solving these issues.

What should KDADS do first? (related to long-term services)

Some overlap with other group -trying to get VR figured out. Question: Is there an employment plan with goals as part of the PCSP? Individualized plan versus a set model for how long the person is in a step of the process. Making sure that is how it is directed (individualized) should be a priority.

KDADS reply: they have met with other states through various conferences to get a lot of great examples on how other states are doing this.

What process could look like – how to get back on supported employment if a situation changes?

Jobs can be lost while in the process of getting back on – the person served feels like they have "graduated" from the need for supportive employment and closes out of SE

services. Then they have a hiccup in employment and need back on – they have to go back through CDDO to complete the choice process and then work with their MCO to get approved before any coaching can happen. By the time all of that gets done, they have lost their job because they were having trouble in the first place.

KDADS: please share/send social stories with Mitzie & Mark so they can know it is happening – would be extremely helpful in advocacy for SE. (Losing jobs while in process of getting back on SE waiver.)

Benefit planning & Myths

Early on – educating parents and guardians about availability for persons served being able to work. They can work and should work – not just rely on benefits. Having education from the get-go. Suggestion of having a hotline or app or somewhere to access the information, rather than based on “rumors” of how it could impact their benefits. Whether going to VR, SE, you need to be upfront that it will NOT impact/effect the person’s served benefits. If it will – here’s how it will. Give people options of how to make it work – where to adjust to be able to work and not lose benefits or if benefits will change, how to adjust to those changes. Don’t make not getting competitive employment an option. Sometimes even the support team has the information wrong. Case manager didn’t know, VR counselor didn’t know – they need to talk to a benefits counselor.

Lack of Knowledge about SE

First thing to make biggest impact: bring back transition councils – to refer people for information/updates.

State-wide campaign targeted for employers to be informed to know about SE. Social media? Advertising? Not just informing families and people, but employers.

Awareness of pre-ed services, seems to be regional, not available in all areas. There seems to be a lack of knowledge that they even exist.

CDDOs supporting fairs/information sessions on information on SE.

Again – we are just spinning wheels talking about how great SE is until there is a rate that incentivizes providers to provide the services.

National Disability Awareness month is coming up – use that to promote. (Cottonwood has a lot on their FB social media)

Rate

Current rate is \$17.88. Confusing on what is billable. Different agencies have been given different instructions on how/what to bill. MCOs have given various instructions on what acceptable to pay. So first would be to get everyone on same page of how it works – billing, what is payable, etc. Actual cost at Joblink is \$40 per hour, which is not sustainable at \$17.88 (the current rate). And definitely no room for 1/1 support at that rate. Can a cost study be done? To look at rate to match the actual cost. The law requires the rate to cover the cost. (It's not covering if you are only billing for the face-to-face time.) Being able to bill for full schedule – for when the person is on the job and someone is on-call for support or called for support. There is a proposal out there that would increase the rate based on tier level, but that is being adjusted currently, anyway. The rate needs to cover costs, obviously, but if we really want to promote SE, it needs to be incentivized over alternate services. And right now it doesn't. We need to build a system where the rate is higher while the infrastructure and the systems are being established and then look at it coming down somewhat.

KDADS: WORK program & VR increased reimbursement rates, so that will help SE get rates increased.

Comment: Provider associating is gearing up to approach legislature about investing more in supported employment.

Chat comments:

I think the entire DD stakeholder community also supports significantly increasing both the Supported Employment rate along with the activities that are billable.

There is precedent of KDADS issuing a memo on allowing to bill for availability for Residential Supports, so they could do the same for allowing to bill for availability during the consumer's full work schedule for Supported Employment

Conclusion & Next Steps

WSU & KDADS will check in to review the work completed so far and determine what is still needed from the group. Carri will email the group with the next steps after they meet.