**June 4, 2014**

**DCF Update on Activities Associated with Employment First Policy and Principles:**

DCF supports the policy spelled out in the Kansas Employment First Initiative Act, as amended. The following report describes the most recent activities undertaken by DCF that by design implements the Employment First policy.

*Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)* is the primary DCF program designed to assist persons with disabilities to obtain, maintain or regain employment. VR serves persons whose disabilities result in a substantial impediment to employment and who need VR services to get or keep a competitive, integrated job. VR services are not limited to the type of disability a person has, nor are services limited by the type of job they choose to pursue. VR services can include services to prepare an individual to obtain a job, to assist the person in finding the job and to help them be successful once they get the job. Services can include post-secondary education or training, assistive technology, medical services, transportation, job finding services, on-the-job supports and many other types of services.

As reported previously, in late July, 2013 Rehabilitation Services entered into an agreement with Public Consulting Group (PCG) to conduct an evaluation and cost study of our employment related services provided under Provider Agreements with private individuals and organizations. One purpose of the evaluation of these services is to assess the strengths and deficits in our current agreements and pay structures, and to identify improvements that can be made in the services and service descriptions that are part of those Agreements. The second focus of the study is to assess providers’ costs to conduct the services and the indicators of success of those providers.

The time studies have been completed by providers and PCG is completing their analysis now. We were disappointed that mental health providers were not well represented in the data submitted. However, ID/DD were well represented as were more general placement and supported employment providers. I am hopeful we can provide an executive summary of the findings to the Disability Sub-Cabinet next quarter and look forward to recommendations on how VR might move forward with recommendations contained in the report.

DCF / VR continues to participate with KDADS, Commerce and the KanCare MCO’s in an assessment and planning project for improving the competitive integrated employment outcomes of Kansans with disabilities accessing our different systems. The project is funded by US Department of Labor Office on Disability Employment Programs (ODEP). The planning is being facilitated by the Dr. Lisa Mills of the Lead Center, Madison, Wisconsin. The LEAD Center is also piloting a group discovery model developed for job seekers accessing traditional WIA programs at local workforce investment locations. It is being piloted in Sedgwick County and Independence in SE Kansas.

Rehabilitation Services is continuing development of a business outreach, marketing and development initiative. In cooperation with members of the Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) the agency established a position to do employer development. That position supports members of the SRC to participate in employer outreach opportunities. The position will also work with field staff to identify and refer qualified applicants from VR counselor consumers to employers who respond with interest in hiring. Marketing materials and a website were put together for the “Good For Business” campaign. Jill Bronaugh was hired for this initiative and has begun interacting with businesses, economic development entities and individual employers to encourage open doors to VR consumers to meet their workforce needs. A brochure is attached for your convenience.

The Department for Children and Families is a partner with KDADS on implementing strategies recommended by the governor’s Mental Health Taskforce. Among those strategies is increased access to employment as a stabilizing and therapeutic component of treatment for those Kansans who experience severe mental illness or severe and persistent mental illness.