

Transition Transformers Coalition

2018 GAPS AND SOLUTIONS Per 2018 Employment First Summit

In alignment with its charter the Transition Transformers Coalition has prepared the following summary of questions, gaps, and possible solutions identified by stakeholders who attended the 2018 Employment First Summit. Professionals, support staff, persons with disabilities and family members of persons with disabilities were asked to identify gaps/solutions in resources to assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining employment and services that would support employment in May of 2018. Steve Gieber from Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities explains the process in this [video](#). The *Questions Posed* section of this document includes responses prepared by the Coalition.

The solutions and gaps identified at the end of this document will be direct to relevant state agencies for clarification and/or resolution.

Questions Posed

Below are questions posed by attendees of the 2018 Kansas Employment First Summit and answers devised by members of the Transition Transformers Coalition.

1. When will community mental health centers prioritize a focus on evidence-based employment services?

There is no definitive response to this, but individuals should understand that Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) are reimbursed at a higher rate for providing supported employment service when those services are evidence-based. **The Kansas Department of Aging & Disability Services (KDADS) will be contacted for a more comprehensive response.** Of issue will be the small differential in payment CMHCs receive compared to the additional work they must provide. KDADS should be asked the following questions: (1) Are CMHCs are required to provide employment services in their contracts with the state? (2) Are they all doing it? (3) Are they all using the Individualized Placement Services (IPS) model? (4) If not using IPS model, is the differential high enough to incentivize using the IPS model?

2. Are there other resources out there besides VR?

There are additional resources available. Post K-12 benefits are based on: (1) extensive eligibility criteria; (2) individual needs; (3) barriers; and (4) goals.

People often struggle finding services because they do not know “the lingo” that get them to the correct service. **Service providers** need to learn how to better communicate services that are available and how to access them. It should not be necessary for consumers to learn “the lingo” to obtain the service. If we have the right tools to provide the services, the service providers must adapt to meet the needs of the individual.

Also critical, is cross-training among service providers to assist with referring individuals to their best options for service.

Members of the Transformers will identify systems that will serve as a “front door” for resources in areas across the state. The Kansas Commission on Disability Concerns has prepared statewide maps of resources available. These are available on their website at <https://kcdinfo.ks.gov/resources/service-maps> and on the *Transition to Employment: Tips, Tricks and Tools Resource Guide* available by clicking [here](#).

3. Normalize the individualized plan of study and how does the individualized plan of study in schools fit in with this (the banner)?

The Education Transition group will be asked to respond to this.

4. When should I start thinking about employment for my kid?

It’s never too early for parents to begin thinking about employment for their child. Parents should have expectations of employment for their child. The skills young children learn at home teach them how to perform skills necessary for employment (following instructions, responsibility for chores/tasks, interpersonal communication, etc). In addition, parents are encouraged to explore employment opportunities for their teenage children. Research has shown that there is a direct correlation between employment during high school and employment in adulthood.

5. How do I talk to educators and my case managers about employment?

Kansas is an Employment First state, meaning competitive, integrated employment should be the first option for individuals with disabilities.

Individuals need not wait for a case manager to discuss employment. School counselors and special educators should be where the conversation begins. Individuals should be frank about what they want to do for employment and be open to suggestions that will help align vocational goals with innovative job opportunities. Discussing why one wants a particular job leads to identifying vocational goals, which can usually be found in multiple jobs.

Case managers would benefit from training regarding programs like *KDHE Working Healthy/WORK* and *Family Employment Awareness Training (FEAT)* offered by Families Together, Inc.

6. How do we streamline all these options to make life easier for clients? Looks like a total maze to the consumers.

Individuals can use the *Life Course Framework* and seek regional resources <https://kcdd.org/about-us/creating-a-good-life-a-lifecourse-framework>.

Community Developmental Disability Organizations (CDDOs) are a valuable starting point from which to gather information. You may find CDDOs by going to

<https://kcdinfo.ks.gov/resources/service-maps>. In addition, Independent Living Resource Centers are another good starting point.

Transformer members will identify systems that will serve as a “front door” for resources in areas across the state

7. How can we improve our relationship with employers? What skills should we help people with disability learn to fit in today’s changing economy?

Communicate with an employer to determine what their needs are for employment. Once you know the need, provide a qualified candidate for the employer. To maintain the relationship and build trust, follow up with the employer to ensure the placement is working out. Follow up should occur frequently and gradually decrease as success is achieved (e.g., follow up the day after placement, three to four days after placement, then weekly, then every other week and expanding from there). If there is a problem, be available to the employer to work through the issue.

Employers are consistently reporting that soft skills (punctuality, attendance, grooming habits, etc.) help open the door to employment. These skills should be the initial focus. Thereafter, skills people should learn are the ones employers are seeking.

8. Client obligations are a real barrier. Is there anything that the state can do to help folks with this?

Some members of the Transformer group will focus on this during the 2019 Legislative Session to include adjusting the client obligation or “spend down” and/or becoming an “expansion state. Increasing the Medicaid protected income level, which would decrease the client obligation or “spend down,” might be helpful. This has not been adjusted since 1997-1998. A state has the power to establish the Medicaid spend down amount or determine that there be no spend down.

Consumers should speak with a *Working Healthy* Benefits Specialist to understand how to balance their benefits while being employed. Even with a client obligation one will come out ahead with employment. Consumer should also be aware that the *Working Healthy/WORK* program is available and there is no client obligation or “spend down” involved.

Working Healthy/WORK <http://www.kdheks.gov/hcf/workinghealthy/index.htm>

KDHE is also working on rolling out a supported employment pilot for those ineligible for *Working Healthy/WORK*. The pilot is targeted to begin in July 2019.

[Click here](#) for the Kansas Ombudsman’s explanation of *KanCare Share of Cost Overview* and [click here](#) for information on patient liability and client obligation. [These may also be found by visiting the [Transition to Employment-Tips, Trick Tools](#), opening “9. Resources” and clicking on “Client Obligation Explained” or “Explanation of Share of Costs”.]

Identified Gaps

The following gaps were identified by attendees of the 2018 Employment First Summit and appear exactly as submitted during the Summit.

1. Employment options in rural areas;
2. More rural job supports (developers, job coached) to promote community based inclusive employment
3. Need transportation, especially in rural areas. In too many communities the hours for general public transportation are limited (e.g., Franklin County is 8-2:30 M-F).
4. I like to stay at Wichita college scholarship looking for job see aunt grandma living in Kansas.
5. Mental health centers and state hospitals need to develop competency and capacity to serve individuals with IDDD who have co-occurring mental illness
6. Lack of outreach/support in western KS
7. The need for transitional services from benefits to working families
8. Individuals who support youth do not refer families to existing resources. Even when the resources exist.
9. There is no longer a Rainbow Catchment Area
10. Lack of referrals for VR to Centers for Independent Living
11. Support money for programs in rural and elsewhere and access to technology
12. Not knowing all programs and who to make the referral to and not getting help when needed.
13. KRS claims to give priority to the more severely disable population but they give no help to students with significant disabilities.
14. Misinformation and myths about what some state agencies can and cannot do
15. Lack of consistent education advocacy between education and community providers.

Possible Solutions

The following list are possible solutions for the gaps identified by the attendees of 2018 Employment First Summit and appear exactly as submitted.

1. Speaking a common language across state agencies. State agencies not working together.
2. Stump the Star Website – central place to submit non-eligibility support/resources to build statewide directory
3. Extend Working Healthy to full retirement age of 67 or beyond if people want to work.
4. Age out for Working Healthy/WORK
5. Allocate marketing dollars to Working Healthy/WORK, more need to know
6. Expand Adult Project Search

7. Perhaps Project Search could become a service provider as a way to fund an adult to go through the program; adults are not on IEPs
8. Throw out job descriptions and flipping questions around to look at the positive skills.
9. More person-centered job carving
10. Upgrading the communication between agencies and regions. Increasing collaboration
11. Legislate to end sub-minimum wages in Kansas
12. Remove 14(c) the law from Kansas, which allows sub-minimum wages and expect more from CDDOs and Community Service Providers
13. Refer families and youth to Families Together, which is federally funded to help families.
14. Professional learning experience toolkit guide for work-based learning.
15. We need career ladder for PCAs and job coaches/specialists.
16. Require transition app to be available to all Kansans and USDs (iTransition)
17. Require Voc Fit Assessment for all VR counselors
18. Lack of dissemination of info about what programs and links and how they can all work together versus against each other; lack of braided funding
19. Gathering or conference of all state agencies and providers to disseminate what services they provide
20. Quarterly listserv or newsletter that all state agencies contribute quarterly updates occurring in their agency/provider
21. Website that weaves together all support for one family – management that is simple and user-friendly
22. Stop fragmentation – user-friendly website for youth, then providers, then families to get resources “meeting people where they are at”
23. Build capacity in communities
24. Make local businesses aware that people with disabilities are great employees
25. Use Life Course Tools for all early in life.