



Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities

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*“To ensure the opportunity to make choices regarding participation in society
and quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities”*

Nov. 18, 2016

Robert G. (Bob) Bethell Joint Committee on Home and Community Based Services and KanCare Oversight

Re: Employment First and KanCare: Turning the Dream into Reality

Chairman Hawkins and members of the KanCare Oversight Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about Employment First and KanCare. My name is Craig Knutson, and I am a Public Policy Coordinator for the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities (KCDD). The Council was created by state and federal law with the expressed intent that Council activities would increase self advocacy and leadership efforts of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), promote systems and systemic change, and enhance capacity building so that people with disabilities could live as independently as possible in the communities of their choice.

Competitive, integrated employment is the foundation for any individual, regardless of disability status, to live a life of their choosing. For this reason, over the years, the Council has supported numerous projects that promote competitive, integrated employment including the biannual Employment First Summit, small business development grants for people with disabilities, Project SEARCH (which in the past year achieved over 80% positive employment outcomes for participants), and most recently, commissioned a report by Stephen Hall, Ph. D. from Griffin Hammis & Associates titled *A Kansas Roadmap to Improve Employment Outcomes Of Its Citizens with Disabilities*, or more commonly known as the Kansas Roadmap to Employment.

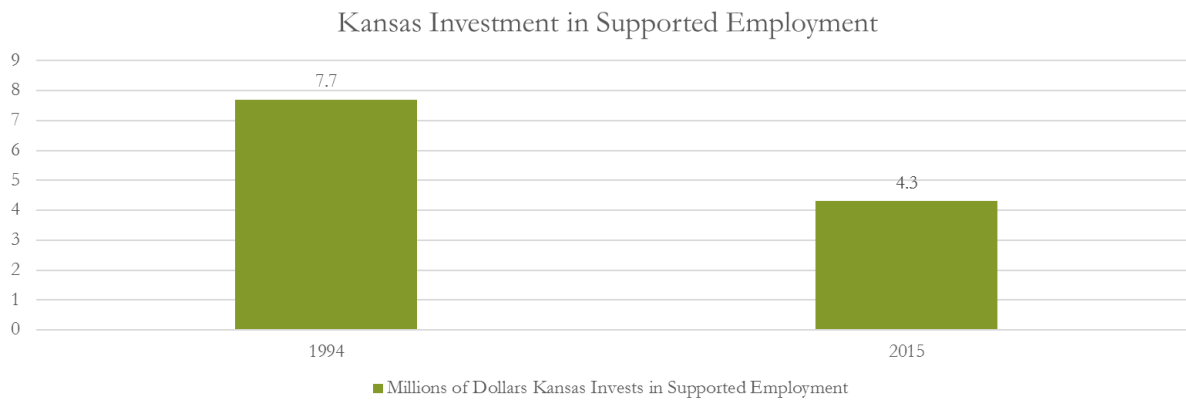
Dr. Hall conducted an analysis of state and federal laws and policies regarding employment first activities and compared what Kansas is doing with both regional and national trends. The results of his findings give us both cause for concern—and hope going forward should we follow his Roadmap to Employment.

Historically, Kansas has been a national leader in disability policy and employment practices. Twenty years ago, Kansas was in the top five states for disability employment services; one of Governor Brownback’s first pieces of legislation that he signed into law was the Employment First Initiative in 2011 (K.S.A. 44-1136-38) making Kansas the first official “Employment First” state in the nation.

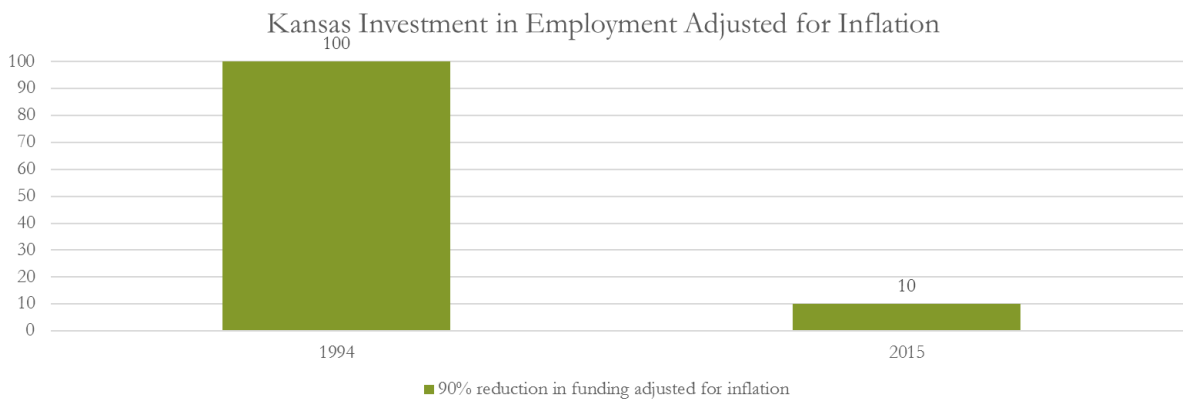
Unfortunately, since signing that legislation, the expected result of increased competitive, integrated employment of persons with disabilities has not come to fruition. In fact, the opposite has happened: there has been an 8.3% increase in the number of people with I/DD that engage in nonwork day activities over the past several years.

This trend is consistent with the priorities of the state over the past twenty years.

In 1994, when Kansas was a national leader in the competitive, integrated employment of people with disabilities, the state invested \$7.4 million in Supported Employment services; in 2015, our state only invested \$4.3 million in Supported Employment services. This is a 42% dollar for dollar reduction over that timeframe.

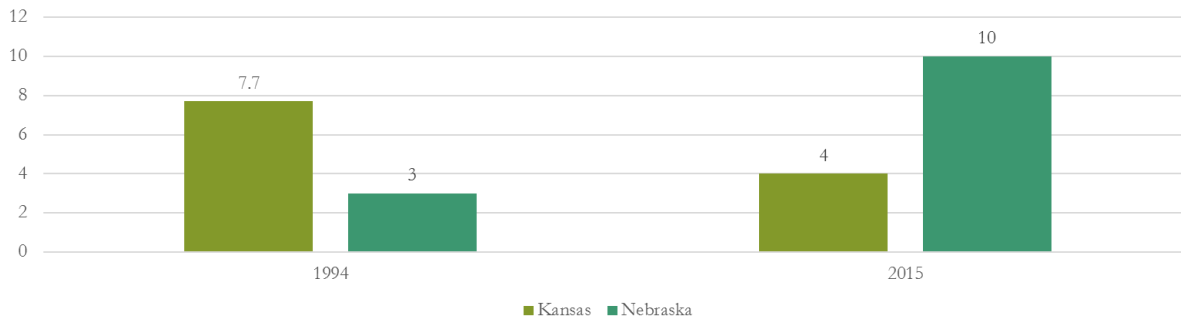


Once accounting for inflation, however, the net result is a 90% reduction in the funding of Supported Employment activities.



So what does this mean for Kansans with disabilities? Simply put: If that same person were to move 75 miles to the north, they would be 8x as likely to be engaged in competitive, integrated employment. While Kansas has decrease its funding of Supported Employment over the past twenty years, our neighbor to the north, Nebraska, has increased its funding by a similar reciprocal amount.

Kansas and Nebraska: A Change in Fortunes
Millions of dollars invested in Supported Employment



In short, you get what you pay for.

Kansas spends roughly \$490 million/year on all I/DD services, however, less than 1 cent on every dollar is spent on Supported Employment—and our outcomes reflect that investment.

There is a better way, and it is cost neutral; it won't cost the taxpayers a single dime.

Kansas taxpayers spend a lot of money on disability services; Kansas ranks 27th in the nation in terms of fiscal effort. However, as a state, we need to change our focus on the types of services we deliver if we expect different results.

The Council has an evidence based, best practices, plan that can help push the needle of disability employment activities in the right direction again. We believe that this plan has the support of the administration, but we also need the support of the managed care organizations to fully implement it. Parts of this plan need to be included in the upcoming MCO contracts so that they will be held accountable for positive employment outcomes.

The Council applauds current and past employment efforts by the MCOs such as the Empower Kansans grant from UnitedHealth Care and the assumption of statewide coordination of Project SEARCH by Lifeshare, USA, a subsidiary of Sunflower Health Plan. To effect long term and wide ranging change, however, we need to incentivize the outcomes we desire: This requires measureable, systemic change.

The Kansas Roadmap to Employment has many recommendations for systems change, but I just want to touch upon a couple of them.

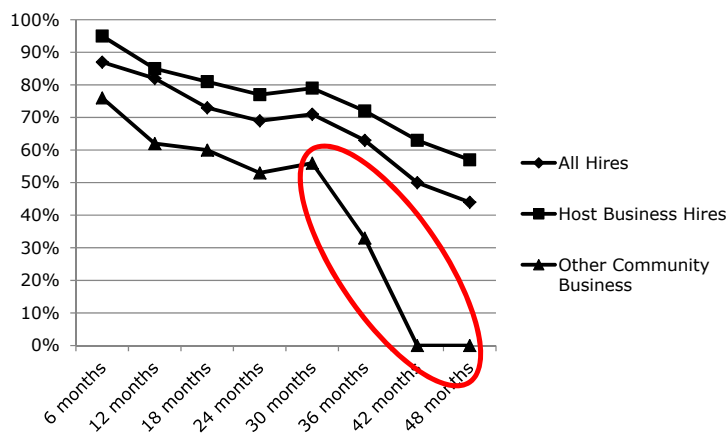
First and foremost, we need to shift money from a provider centric model of service delivery to a person centered model of services. When a person controls the money, providers must compete for their services.

Secondly, we need to move money from congregate day facility settings and incentivize Supported Employment services. Providers must be incentivized to support competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities. Furthermore, providers must be reimbursed at a rate that makes good business sense for them. Current reimbursement rates preclude that opportunity. Providers must also be reimbursed to provide long term, follow along services to

ensure that people remain employed once they find a job. This, currently, is not a feasible option in Kansas due to the nature, structure, and amount of reimbursement rates. Follow along supports are essential to positive long term employment outcomes.

The University of Rochester conducted a longitudinal study of employment outcomes for interns who participated in Project SEARCH in New York state. What they found is pretty telling: When a person with a disability has either paid or built in long term employment supports, they tend to have similar long term employment outcomes as their non-disabled peers. However, in the absence of long term employment supports, expectations of positive employment outcomes halved at 36 months and dropped to zero at 42 months.

Job retention



25



Finally, we need to start young. People in all walks of life need to be educated about the importance and benefits of employing people with disabilities. All people need to be valued members of the communities of their choice, and there is no better entrance to the community than with competitive, integrated employment.

The conclusion of the Roadmap to Employment perhaps sums it up best:

There is no good reason why Kansas has one-third fewer citizens with disabilities working than the average state. The money is there. Significant changes in where and how it is spent is overdue.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Craig Knutson

Public Policy Coordinator

Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities

A copy of the Kansas Roadmap to Employment is available upon request. Please email Craig Knutson at cknutson@kcdd.org to request your copy of the report.