



# Creating a Path to Employment

*Presented by Cheryl Laaker, Manager of Community Engagement*





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## Goals of this Training

- \* Provide brief overview of disability and employment.
- \* Provide discussion points.
- \* Provide brief overview of employment resources/programs.



# Many Working-Age People with Disabilities Want to Work

- \* People with disabilities who are not working
  - \* About 7% of Kansans with disabilities were actively looking for work in 2013
  - \* About 60% say they would like to work

Key Point: Discuss employment with members with disabilities.



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## Kansas is an Employment First State

- ✱ In 2011, House Bill No. 2336 was enacted making Kansas an Employment First state
- ✱ This act states that competitive and integrated employment shall be considered its first option when serving persons with disabilities who are working age to obtain employment.
- ✱ It also established the Employment First oversight commission.



# WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act)

- \* If workers are age 24 or younger hired after July 22, 2016, they must first explore employment and work with Voc Rehab before working at subminimum wage.
- \* Regardless of age, if working at subminimum wage; they must receive annual career counseling and be provided with training on self-advocacy, self-determination and participate in peer mentoring opportunities

# Employment is a Positive Health Outcome for Members

- \* Increased social participation
- \* Higher quality of life and life satisfaction
- \* Increased self-esteem and decreased depression
- \* Reduced poverty and enhanced economic wellbeing
- \* Sense of identity and purpose
- \* Rhythm of the day
- \* Connections with others, contribution to society



## Create the Path

- \* Encourage independence and increase expectations
  - \* Teach responsibility through chores
  - \* Teach self advocacy at a young age
  - \* Teach how to follow instructions and that there are rules in life
  - \* Teach how to accept criticism
  - \* Teach how to respect others
  - \* Allow them to make mistakes



# The Path ...

- \* Talk about work
  - \* Work history, interests, preferences, goals
  - \* Communicate positive experiences/success stories
  - \* Incorporate into person-centered planning
  - \* What services and supports are needed to develop a personal pathway to employment?
  - \* Assure there are vocational goals on the IEP (Individualized Education Program/Plan)

# The Path ...

- \* Presume employability
  - \* Working with people “where they are”
  - \* Not waiting until someone is “graduated” from a sheltered workshop, “ready, stable” or “has no behaviors”



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## The Path ...

- \* Identify strengths
  - \* What skills are they independent on?
  - \* What are their physical strengths? Fine motor vs gross motor
  - \* Where do they have the longest attention span?
- \* Find jobs that will enhance these strengths
- \* Attend Family Employment Awareness Training through Families Together





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## Create Opportunities for Learning

- \* Find opportunities to volunteer
- \* Create/find places to explore new interests
- \* Support the person to challenge themselves
- \* Educate on how employment affects their benefits



# Assistive Technology

- \* Think outside the box – 3D printers
- \* Make it specific to the individual and the job
- \* May have to try several different types before finding one that works
- \* Does not have to be complex (laminated grid with pictures)

# Assistive Technology for Kansans Project

*ATK connects people with disabilities and health conditions of all ages with the assistive technology they need to learn, work, play and participate in community life safely and independently.*

- \* Technical consultation/recommendations
- \* Hands-on demonstrations
- \* Equipment loan
- \* Equipment reuse/reutilization
- \* Funding/loans
- \* Home modification evaluations
- \* [atk.ku.edu](http://atk.ku.edu) or (1-800-KANDOIT)





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## Employment Options

- \* Community-based opportunities
- \* Integrated within a business
- \* Preferably business-paid not provider-paid wages at minimum wage or higher
- \* Internships (paid and unpaid experience)
- \* Americorps or other community programs





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## Employment Options

- \* Local programs that focus on employment skills
- \* Small Business Ownership
- \* Post-secondary education/vocational training
- \* Transition programs like Project SEARCH





# Resources

- \* Learn/network with employment resources
  - \* Vocational rehabilitation
  - \* Workforce centers (<http://us.jobs/state-workforce-agencies.asp>)
  - \* Benefits/work incentives counseling (state Medicaid buy in programs)
  - \* Assistive technology



# Vocational Rehabilitation

- \* The disability employment agency for the state of Kansas.
  - \* Vocational rehabilitation can help you get and/or keep a job.
  - \* Call for an appointment or submit application online.
  - \* [www.dcf.ks.gov/services/RS/Pages/Employment-Services.aspx](http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/RS/Pages/Employment-Services.aspx)
  - \* Presumptive eligibility for Kansans who already receive SSI or SSDI.
  - \* Services do not begin until Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) is written and approved. (90 days)
  - \* Also a resource for post-secondary education and training.
  - \* End-Dependence Kansas Grant



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# Working Healthy

## What is it?

- \* A state & federally funded Medicaid buy-in program that provides KanCare benefits for working people with permanent disabilities.
- \* Pay Medicaid premium instead of client obligation or spenddown.

## Who qualifies?

- \* Kansans age 16-64 with physical or mental disabilities who are competitively employed with verifiable income.
- \* Must meet the Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) standard, even if not currently receiving SSDI.
- \* Assets of less than \$15,000 and net family income below the Working Healthy program limits.

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“

Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value.

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Albert Einstein



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# Questions

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