

Focus on Medicaid Infrastructure Grant

Kansas has had Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) funding since 2001. Initially used to implement *Working Healthy*, since 2007 the funds have been directed toward addressing barriers to employment beyond the Medicaid agency and working to remove them. The November 2010 *Working Healthy* newsletter included an article about the Governor's Executive Order that resulted from a MIG effort to ensure that state policy promoted and incentivized competitive employment for Kansans with disabilities. Throughout 2011, we will showcase some other MIG initiatives. This issue provides information about two MIG-funded pilot projects that address attitudinal barriers. These projects and other MIG efforts are designed to ensure that when jobs are available Kansans with disabilities are available to fill them.

Family Employment Awareness Training (FEAT)

By Judith M.S. Gross, PhD, Beach Center on Disability, University of Kansas

The Family Employment Awareness Training (FEAT) was developed and implemented by the Beach Center on Disability at the University of Kansas in collaboration with Families Together, Inc., the Kansas Parent Training and Information Center. FEAT was funded through the state Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) for the purpose of increasing the expectations of individuals with disabilities and their families regarding the possibilities for the member with a disability to obtain meaningful and satisfying employment in the family's community. To that end, the FEAT project has four primary goals:

- 1) Increase expectations regarding employment,
- 2) Teach participants to identify and access Kansas resources that can support employment,
- 3) Develop self-advocacy and problem solving skills in participants, and
- 4) Build capacity through a "train-the-trainer" model in order to create meaningful change through a sustained effort.

The FEAT training curriculum was designed to meet these goals by addressing the following topics:

- The family/parent role in supporting employment;
- Research on supported and customized employment;
- Different types of employment (e.g., carved, created, resource ownership, self-employment) and examples of successful employment in Kansas;
- School and healthcare transition;
- Support resources for employees and employers;
- Services, benefits, and programs available in Kansas to support employment;
- Funding and information resources; and
- Anti-discrimination laws

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Youth Employment Program Students Excel

By *Ranita Wilks, Independence Inc.*

Since 2008, AJ Alexander, Sandy Slemple, and Liz Anderson are only three of the youth who have obtained employment through Independence Inc.'s Youth Employment Program (YEP). YEP is a collaborative project of Independence, Inc., and USD 497, funded by the Kansas Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) to target youth with significant disabilities (15-21 years) who have limited or no prior community-based work experience. YEP provides youth the opportunity to participate in 80 hours of community-based work trials. After the trial period, employers have the opportunity to hire the YEP participant on a permanent basis. Since 2008, sixty-six youth have enrolled in the program with 17 obtaining permanent employment. The program has forty-five employers that serve as work trial sites for YEP.

In addition to employment outcomes, the program also focuses on helping the youth develop their independent living, self-advocacy, communication, and social skills. The overall object is to prepare the youth for a successful transition to adulthood that includes competitive, integrated work experience. All youth participants develop an independent living plan (ILP) with Independence, Inc. The ILP focuses on overall transition goals that the youth wants to complete.

According to Mistie Copas-Thomas, Community Transition Social Worker for USD 497, "YEP has been wonderful! The students are given an opportunity to earn a paycheck, which in turn helps them to create a budget in the real world."

Alexander has been employed at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning for a year. "I love my job," says Alexander, who has autism. "I feel like I am very successful." Slemple and Anderson both work at TJ Maxx in the fitting rooms. "If it wasn't for Independence, Inc. and YEP, I would have never come to work at TJ Maxx," says Anderson, who has attention deficit disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, and dyslexia. "I want to keep working here, and possibly move to the jewelry counter." Slemple tried on her own to get jobs in the past. "No one would hire me, and I became scared. "Here [at TJ Maxx], no one discriminates against me or puts me down because of my disability," said Slemple. "I am excited to have a job and get a paycheck."



Anderson (left) and Slemple sort clothes from a bin while working in the fitting room at TJ Maxx.

Oral Health Problems Among Working Healthy Participants

By *Shawna Carroll, MPH, MA, Graduate Research Assistant, KU Research & Evaluation Team*

The 2010 *Working Healthy* annual satisfaction survey included a series of oral health questions taken from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). We compared *Working Healthy* enrollee responses to those of the Kansas general population. *Working Healthy* participants have significantly greater oral health needs than the general population. In particular, *Working Healthy* participants compared to other Kansans are much more likely to be missing teeth due to decay or gum disease, are less likely to have had their teeth professionally cleaned in the last year or to have visited a dentist or dental clinic. *Working Healthy* participants also reported experiencing high rates of oral pain (nearly 40% had occasional or frequent pain) and 1 in 6 reported occasionally or often having difficulty doing their usual job(s) because of problems with their teeth, mouth, or dentures. Currently, Kansas Medicaid covers only emergency dental services (primarily extractions) for *Working Healthy* enrollees.

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BRFSS Topic	Working Healthy Enrollees	Kansas	p-value
No teeth missing due to decay or gum disease †	35.3%	60.0%	<0.01
All teeth missing due to decay or gum disease	13.4%	5.5%	<0.01
Teeth professionally cleaned in past 12 months ††	38.1%	70.7%	<0.01
Visited dentist or dental clinic in past 12 months†††	48.3%	70.5%	<0.01

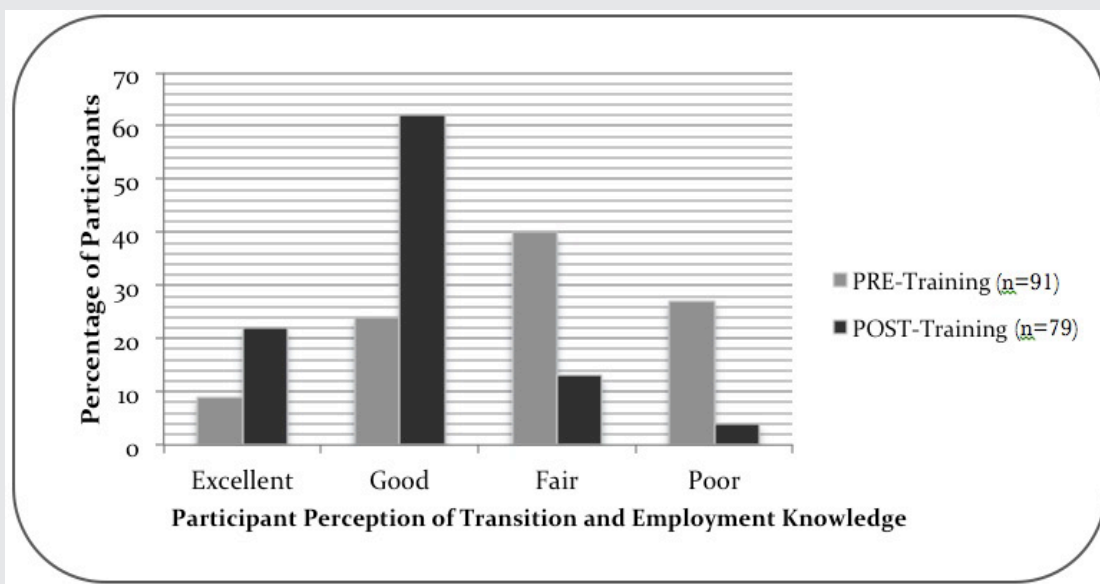
Notes: †BRFSS n = 8,512, WH n = 428; ††BRFSS n = 7,737, WH n = 420; †††BRFSS n = 8,579, WH n = 429; †2008 results from Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), Kansas BRFSS <http://www.kdhehs.gov/BRFSS>

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Six trainings were conducted across Kansas in 2010. Each training consisted of presentation of content, brainstorming activities, networking, provision of resources and contact information, plan development and follow-up technical assistance. Families and individuals with disabilities were able to network with one another as well as with representatives from various Kansas employment services and programs. Local families and individuals with disabilities were invited to the training to share their stories of how they successfully navigated employment. The service and program representatives were invited to share information and to meet first-hand with participants and answer questions.

Overall, participants positively evaluated the training content and format as well as reported an increase in their transition and employment knowledge following the trainings.

For more information about FEAT, contact Judith at jgross@ku.edu



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Additional copies and copies in alternate formats are available upon request by writing the University of Kansas, CRL - Division of Adult Studies, Attn: Noelle, JR Pearson Hall, Room 521, 1122 West Campus Rd., Lawrence, KS 66045-3101, by calling (800) 449-1439, or by emailing, pixie@ku.edu

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