

Outreach Contract Awarded to Breakthrough Club

We are pleased to announce that Breakthrough Club in Wichita has been selected to provide Working Healthy outreach services across the state. Working in collaboration with SRS and the University of Kansas, Breakthrough Club will make presentations to potential Working Healthy participants and other interested parties. These meetings will explain the benefits of the program to potential participants, acquaint employers with this new resource, and inform service providers (agencies and individuals who render employment or other services to potential Working Healthy participants) about this key benefit for their consumers. In addition to presentations, Breakthrough Club will visit major community employers to update them about this new employee resource and discuss tax incentives to hiring persons who have a disability. Breakthrough Club in conjunction with KU will design all printed materials used in the outreach initiative.



Paul Jasinski,
Breakthrough Club

As many of you know, Working Healthy is a new program that allows Kansans who have a disability to return to the workforce and purchase their Medicaid Coverage! Working Healthy will help many Kansans who have a disability enter the workforce at their maximum capacity. The program uses a formula, based on income, to determine the monthly premiums and there are no spenddowns. Individuals can earn up to 300% of federal poverty level and still be eligible to participate. In addition, participants are allowed greater personal savings both through traditional means as well as through Individual Development Accounts (IDAs). The program will begin July 1st. Very soon, Working Healthy will be spread throughout the state of Kansas. Details about this Outreach initiative will be posted on the Working Healthy web site. For more information, contact Paul Jasinski, at the Breakthrough Club, (316) 269-2534.

New Director of Working Healthy Hired

Congratulations to Mary Ellen O'Brien Wright, who has assumed the position of the Director of Working Healthy. Mary Ellen is filling the position of the late Howard Moses. She has been part of the Working Healthy staff for the past four months and has 22 years of experience working with people with a variety of disabilities in a number of settings. The position of Benefits Specialist Team Leader vacated by Mary Ellen has been advertised, and it is expected that a replacement will be hired in May. You can contact Mary Ellen by phone at (785) 296-5217 or by E-mailing, meow@srskansas.org.

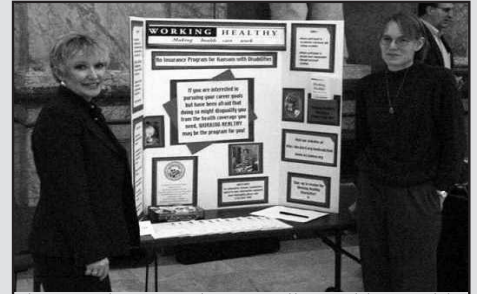
HELP US SAVE A TREE...

Sign up to receive this newsletter via E-mail! Contact Noelle at pixie@ku.edu. THANK YOU!

Recent Happenings...

Over the past few months, staff have continued to spread the word about Working Healthy to consumers, employers, social service workers, legislators and the general public.

- In **February**, Sharon Johnson made presentations to two consumer-run organizations at Wyandotte County Community Supports and Johnson County Community Mental Health Center.
- **February 11th** - Working Healthy was represented at Public Health Day at the capital. Jean Hall and Sharon Johnson shared information and answered questions about the program.
- **March 14th** - Disability Day at the Capital sponsored by SILCK, provided Working Healthy with space to disseminate project information and brochures.
- **April 2nd** - Sharon Johnson presented Working Healthy program information at the 2nd Annual Kans-Trans Transition Conference in Wichita. This statewide conference addresses issues of transition for all Kansas children served by public agencies. It is a collaboration of SRS, KSDE, JJA and other state agencies to ensure that Kansas children transition to positive adult roles and become contributing citizens of our state.
- **April 8th & 9th** - Working Healthy co-sponsored the Kansas Conference on Social Welfare in Lawrence. We were proud to welcome Bryon McDonald, Project and Policy Development Manager of the World Institute on Disability, as our featured speaker for the Working Healthy portion of the conference. Staff presented sessions on the philosophy and background of TW-WIIA and Working Healthy and on the implementation of the program for SRS frontline staff.



Sharon Johnson and Jean Hall at Public Health Day February 11th

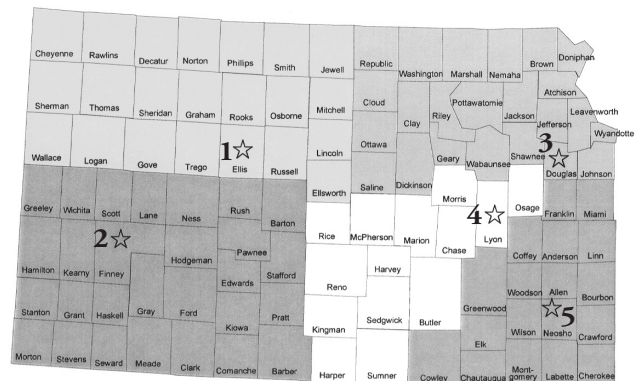
Upcoming Events...

- Statewide implementation training for SRS staff begins **April 22nd** in Topeka
- Advisory Council meeting in Topeka on **May 10th**
- Throughout **May**, Working Healthy staff will be traveling to the 11 Area SRS Offices to provide information to direct service staff in Centers for Independent Living, Community Mental Health Centers, Community Developmental Disability Organizations and any other organizations who provide direct services to people with disabilities. For more information on these presentations in your area contact Mary Ellen O'Brien Wright at meow@srskansas.org or (785) 296-5217.
- **JULY 1st - WORKING HEALTHY START DATE!!**

Five Benefits Specialists Positions Across the State

Currently five Benefits Specialists are being hired in Area SRS Offices across Kansas. The Benefits Specialists will be able to provide consumers with the information they need on the program and assist them in making the best possible decisions regarding their health care coverage.

This map shows the area offices and counties covered by the Specialist in each area. There are plans to hire more Benefits Specialists as Working Healthy enrollment grows in upcoming years. Please contact the office in your area in order to connect with a specialist.



- 3 - Lawrence Area SRS Office (785) 832-3700
- 4 - Emporia Area SRS Office (620) 342-2505
- 5 - Chanute Area SRS Office (620) 431-5000

Legislative Update

The Kansas legislature went into recess Saturday, April 14, with many issues left unresolved. The full Senate and House will return for a wrap-up session May 1 that members say they hope will last no longer than two weeks. In the mean time, a joint House-Senate conference committee is scheduled to meet April 23 to begin drafting the final version of the fiscal 2003 budget.

Some of the major issues affecting Kansans with disabilities that were debated by both chambers are the Level of Care (LOC) scores for people on the home and community based (HCBS) waiver programs and the protected income levels (PIL) for this same group of people. Higher LOCs make it more difficult for people to qualify for HCBS services. Similarly, people enrolled in these programs are currently allowed to keep \$696 of their monthly income to cover their living expenses. Some legislators had proposed drastically reducing the PIL to \$475 per month. At this point in time, neither chamber's budget plans call for increasing LOCs or decreasing the PIL, but these issues will still be on the table and subject to change when the legislature reconvenes.

The Senate Plan

The Senate ended its session with a budget bill that calls for about \$305 million in new spending. The plan does not include any new money for the waiting lists for the Physical Disability (PD) and Developmental Disability (DD) HCBS waivers. Thus, waiting lists for these programs may get significantly larger over the next year. For the PD waiver, level funding would result in more than 1,000 people on the waiting list by the end of next fiscal year.

The revenue package proposed by the Senate tax committee would raise individual income taxes by about 5 percent for three years, with a set-aside of \$10.5 million to provide tax credits for poor working families. The Senate tax plan also would increase the state sales tax to 5.2 percent from 4.9 percent, with \$34.5 million in sales tax rebates to low-income families.

Other provisions of the Senate tax proposal would:

- Increase the cigarette tax by 65 cents a pack, taking it to 89 cents.
- Double the wholesale tax on other tobacco products.
- Increase excise taxes on beer, wine and liquor by \$18.1 million.
- Re-impose inheritance taxes for distant relatives, such as nieces, nephews and non-relative heirs.
- Double the fees that corporations and nonprofit groups pay for the right to do business in Kansas.

Governor Graves had proposed a \$364 million tax package that contains many of these same elements.

The House Plan

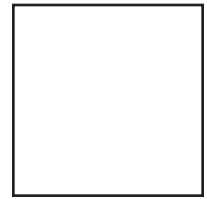
Rep. John Edmonds, R-Great Bend, the chairman of the House Taxation Committee, recently proposed a \$266 tax revenue plan. Like the Senate proposal, it includes increases in the sales tax and excise taxes on cigarettes and tobacco products.

The current House budget would leave a \$106 million shortfall -- and that is if the House sticks to its plan to reduce the state's ending balance requirement of 7.5 percent to 5 percent. Without that reduction, which frees up more than \$100 million, the shortfall would be \$214 million. However, Governor Graves has expressed reservations about reducing the state's ending balance requirement because he believes it would worsen the state's cash flow problems.

So, we have until May 1st to let our legislators know about the needs of people with disabilities and the long-term consequences of some of their budget decisions. The Working Healthy program is a prime example of a way to increase the productivity and decrease dependence of people with disabilities.

WORKING HEALTHY

University of Kansas
Department of Health Policy and Management
c/o CRL, Division of Adult Studies
521 Joseph R. Pearson Hall
1122 West Campus Road
Lawrence, KS 66045-3101
1-785-864-7085



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This newsletter and other information regarding the Working Healthy program can be found on-line at: <http://das.kucrl.org/medicaid.html>

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Additional copies and copies in alternate formats are available upon request by writing the University of Kansas Department of Health Policy and Management, c/o Division of Adult Studies, Attn: Noelle, 1122 West Campus Rd., JRP Hall Rm. 517, Lawrence, KS 66045, by phone (785) 864-7085, by E-mail: pixie@ku.edu

KU Research Team

Michael Fox, Principal Investigator

Jean Hall, Project Director

Noelle Kurth, Editor

Erin Rink, Research Assistant



SRS, Division of Health Care Policy

Marianne Deagle, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary

Mary Ellen O'Brien Wright, Program Director

Sharon Johnson, Deputy Director

