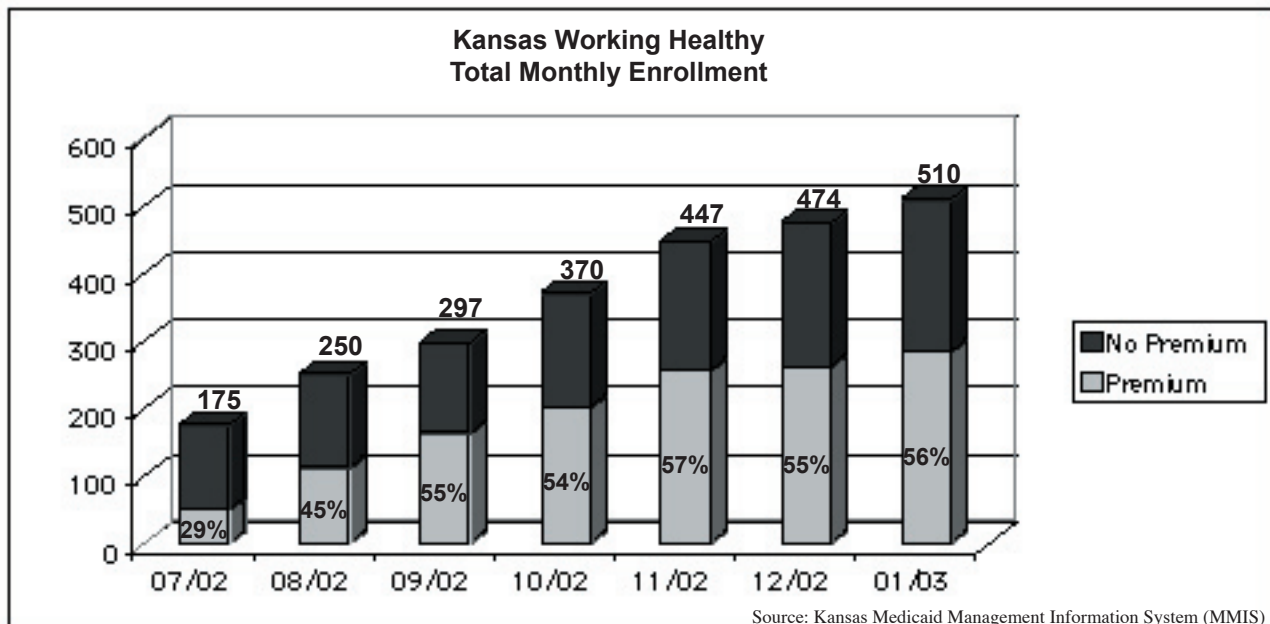


### *Working Healthy Enrollment Keeps Growing*

**M**ore and more Kansans with disabilities are taking advantage of the opportunity to engage in meaningful employment and keep their Medicaid coverage. As of January 2, 2003, 510 individuals were enrolled in Working Healthy and more than half of them (56%) were paying a premium for their coverage (see chart below). As indicated by their comments, consumers really want to work.



## CONSUMER VOICES

Consumer voices is a new addition to the Working Healthy newsletter. These profiles and testimonials are given by consumers and shared with their consent. If anyone is interested in sharing your experiences with the Working Healthy Program, please call our toll free number (800) 449-1439. We would be delighted to hear how Working Healthy is affecting your life and employment experiences.

Many consumers have expressed how Working Healthy has improved their lives and enabled them go back to work or work more hours. One woman told us, "I really like the Working Healthy Program. It is a life saver for people with disabilities who choose to work because the premiums are very reasonable. I do not have an outrageous spenddown and still can receive outstanding health [coverage]."

One Working Healthy consumer shared that working as a CNA for older people provides her not only an income but also a sense of value. With a spenddown of a couple thousand dollars per six months, it was very difficult to maintain her mental health and necessary medications. She

*continued on page 2...*

**Consumer Voices, continued from page 1**

needed greater support and services from the Mental Health Center in dealing with the stress and spenddown than she does with her Working Healthy premium. She goes less often to the MHC and is more able to maintain employment.

Another consumer was recently laid off her job. She said dealing with the lay off and loss of Working Healthy would have been a lot to deal with at once. Staying connected with Working Healthy has helped her maintain her self-esteem and stay positive about finding employment. The employment plan and its regular check ins with her Benefits Specialist has helped her stay on track with looking for a job. Having been a PD Waiver consumer, she will need to rely on earnings to afford the attendant care services she uses to remain living independently in the community. A strong desire to find employment and be self-sufficient leads her to voice her hope that Working Healthy remains in place for her and all other people with disabilities wanting to work.

## **Benefits Specialists' Corner**

This issue's featured Specialist is Norm White from the Lawrence Area Office. Consumers from all over his portion of the state continually comment about how well Norm has assisted them with Working Healthy and in their employment endeavors. Great work Norm, thanks for writing this piece and for your hard work and dedication to the Working Healthy Program! Watch the April issue for a piece from Maddie Anthony, Benefits Specialist from the Wichita area.

### ***Ticket to Work***

Starting a new year with an unemployment rate between 35 to 70 percent and a national sustained employment rate for people on SSDI/SSI of less than 1 percent, people with disabilities continue to experience an ongoing crisis. When people with disabilities succeed in work, they often lose benefits including health care coverage. The collective efforts of disability advocates, consumers, social agencies, congressional leadership and many others created work incentives to address this catch-22. The passage of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act in 1999 included the incentives of the Ticket to Work and Working Healthy Programs.

Employment Networks will offer a variety of Ticket to Work employment services. Working Healthy's seven Benefits Specialists can provide a "neutral" benefit analysis to consumers for informed choices in their selection of an Employment Network and development of an employment plan. CDRs (continuing disability reviews) will be suspended for consumers receiving ticket services. This can allow consumers to achieve Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) while maintaining SSA disability status and keeping beneficial supports. Benefits Specialists provide outreach to all groups requesting information/technical assistance on Working Healthy/Ticket to Work with follow-up consumer services.

The overall increase in statewide capacity resulting from Ticket to Work partnerships can help move that national sustained employment rate for people on SSDI/SSI from less than 1 percent to at least 2 percent. Perhaps the most important success of Ticket to Work and Working Healthy Programs will be the legacy to our young people with disabilities. They will expect to work healthy in their communities and live independently in their own homes and will be able to do so.

**-Norm White, Benefits Specialist**

## *Personal Care Services to Support Employment (PCSE)*

**S**taff members from SRS Health Care Policy and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services are continuing to work together to determine the best means by which to include PCSE for Working Healthy enrollees. Several different possibilities are being explored. We hope to have more information available in the April newsletter.



## *Working Healthy Outreach Efforts Continue*

**T**he Working Healthy Benefits Specialists continue to conduct outreach and educational activities for service providers, employers and consumers. Between October and December of 2002, they provided a total of 159 presentations to 936 individuals. In addition, they had one-on-one contact about the program with 282 consumers. If you would like to have a Benefits Specialist conduct a presentation on Working Healthy for your agency or organization, please contact Nancy Scott at (785) 291-3461 or [NAS@srskansas.org](mailto:NAS@srskansas.org)



## *Surveys Mailed in January*

The University of Kansas staff mailed Satisfaction Surveys to all people who have been enrolled in Working Healthy for at least four months and who had returned a baseline survey prior to the program's implementation. In addition, baseline surveys were mailed to all new enrollees in the program. We will provide a preliminary analysis of consumer satisfaction in the next newsletter.

## *Questions and Answers*

For additional questions and answers please go to the Working Healthy web site, <http://das.kucrl.org/medicaid.html>

In addition to these questions, consumers have expressed particular concerns regarding the Working Healthy Program. Some of these concerns will be addressed in more depth in the April issue.

**Q: Can a consumer be enrolled in Working Healthy and on a Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waiver?**

A: No, a consumer must choose between Working Healthy or an HCBS Waiver.

**Q: Why isn't there a Benefits Specialist in every SRS Area Office?**

A: In light of the present budget constraints as well as the fact that Working Healthy is a new program, seven Benefits Specialist seemed adequate for statewide coverage. Other SRS Area Offices may have a Benefits Specialist added if the budget and program enrollment warrants.

**Q: I am not working right now, but would like to work. What can I do?**

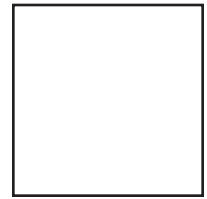
A: You can contact your SRS Worker and/or the Benefits Specialist in your area. They can assist you in contacting employment service programs such as Kansas Rehabilitation Services, Employer Networks, Job Service and One-Stop Centers, etc.

***HELP SAVE TREES...***

*Sign up to receive this newsletter via E-mail  
Contact Noelle at [pixie@ku.edu](mailto:pixie@ku.edu). THANK YOU!*

# WORKING HEALTHY

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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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