

Expanded Working Healthy Coverage

By Jean P. Hall, Ph.D., Principal Investigator

Plans are currently underway to implement a new coverage group for Working Healthy. The group would be known as the “Medically Improved” group and the scheduled implementation date for the new coverage is October 1, 2004.

Individuals meeting the Working Healthy “Basic Coverage” eligibility criteria may continue Working Healthy coverage as “Medically Improved.” The improvement must be in the medical condition that is the same as, or related to, the mental or physical disability that was the basis for their original Social Security claim.

Individuals who have been determined “Medically Improved” by the Social Security Administration (SSA) will be considered by Working Healthy to have a severe medically determinable disability if a medical professional (doctor, nurse practitioner, or psychologist) documents one or more of the following:

- The individual’s disability continues to substantially limit the ability to work or conduct daily life activities;
- The individual has a mental or physical health problem that has been stabilized by assistive technology, medication, treatment, monitoring by medical professionals, or a combination of all of these, and loss of medical services may result in a deterioration of the condition; and
- The loss of medical care could result in the individual’s not being able to continue in the workforce or in his or her health deteriorating to the point that he or she would meet the SSA definition of disability, and become eligible for Social Security payments.

Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Individuals with organ transplants who require medication and/or medical monitoring in order not to reject the transplanted organ;
- Individuals with HIV/AIDS who require medication and/or medical monitoring to lengthen their lifespan;
- Individuals who require medication and/or monitoring for mental health conditions in order to maintain employment;
- Individuals with chronic debilitating illnesses such as multiple sclerosis or rheumatoid arthritis;
- Individuals who use motorized vehicles for mobility purposes or other assistive technology and durable medical equipment in order to perform daily activities and remain employed.

If you have questions about this new coverage group, please contact your local benefits specialist for more information. You can reach the Working Healthy program toll-free at 1-800-449-1439.

Funding for Working Healthy...

The Working Healthy team is in the process of writing a new Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) grant application to secure funding for another year of implementation and planning. This is a competitive grant process. The application is due in early August and we will find out in the fall if the grant is awarded. The grant goals will include the following employment initiatives:

- A pilot project to include technical assistance at one of the Kansas One-Stops
- Information, training and technical support for the development of micro-enterprises and small businesses
- Promotion of Ticket-to-Work services

Benefits Specialists' Corner

This issue features Working Healthy Benefits Specialist Sherri Sherman from the Hays SRS Office in the Northwest region. Sherri has worked for SRS for eleven years, starting as an Income Maintenance worker. At that time, the job entailed working with the elderly, disabled and families. This past experience in medical, food stamps, TAF & GA (cash assistance), employment preparation and child care cases has proven to be beneficial in the Working Healthy position. When not at work, Sherri enjoys gardening, outdoor activities, cooking and spending time with family and friends. Sherri can be contacted by phone at (785) 628-1066 ext. 268 or by E-mail at HASAS@srskansas.org.

When I began the Working Healthy position in 12/03, I had no idea what exciting new challenges and opportunities would lie ahead. I was fortunate to join a team of not only diverse personalities and backgrounds, but also a group who genuinely cares about our consumers. The Benefits Specialists are continually attending trainings and conferences to help better serve people with disabilities. The learning is constant and ongoing. Each case presents a new scenario with choices and multiple possibilities for individual outcomes. Choices are one of the great things about the Working Healthy program. Letting our consumers know what choices they have and helping them make informed decisions is so important. It is human nature to not like change. Many people who receive SSDI benefits are afraid to find employment, because they do not know what their choices are or what will happen to the SSDI benefits that took them so long to get approved. It is our hope that we can present these choices to consumers, through benefits planning, and thus help them make decisions that are right for them.

Perhaps our Working Healthy consumers can best speak for the Working Healthy program. Vaughn Snider is from Hays and is enrolled in Working Healthy. He enrolled in the program in October 2002, shortly after it began in July 2002. I spoke with Mr. Snider regarding the Working Healthy program and he shared the following:

“Being on the Working Healthy program has given me more freedom to be independent and stay healthy. Without the benefits of the Working Healthy program, I would never be able to pay for my medications and surgeries. I would be in debt and would never be able to see my way out. I need my medications or I would not be able to work. From [working with] the SRS Human Support Specialist (HSS), Mary Braden, to the time I stopped at the Topeka office to meet the Working Healthy team leader, Nancy Scott, I have been pleased with the services I have received. The Working Healthy program is a great help to me. I am making an honest living and it makes me feel good about myself.”

The importance of being able to make choices and improve ones life cannot be overstated. Vaughn Snider and many other Working Healthy enrollees have seen their lives improve due to the Working Healthy program and the work of the Benefits Specialists.

The Working Healthy program is currently helping more than 700 enrollees to be able to afford health care and be productive citizens. So, if you are reading our newsletter and think you know someone who could benefit from the Working Healthy Program, please share our information and give us a call. We are here to help.

- Sherri Sherman, Working Healthy Benefits Specialist

Working Healthy Outreach Activities

Upcoming conferences at which Benefits Specialists will conduct Working Healthy Presentations and/or be available to answer questions, include the following:

- July 21, Valeo Behavioral Health Care Employment Specialists (2401 SW 6th St.), Topeka, 9 am
- July 22, Kansas City Offender Reentry Steering Committee, Kansas City Kansas Community College, 1-4
- July 23, KU Transition Summer Institute for Special Education Instructors, Lawrence
- August 5, KS/MO Business Partnership, Bank of America (1200 Main St.), Kansas City, MO, 3-5 pm
- August 9, Kansas Commission on Disability Concerns, SRS Learning Center, Topeka, 9 am - 4 pm
- August 19, Wyandotte County Employment Consortium, Hilton Gardens Inn, Kansas City, 8:30-11:00 am

For additional information regarding conferences and how you can attend, please contact the Benefits Specialist Team Leader, Nancy Scott by phone at 785-291-3461 or by E-mail at NAS@srskansas.org.

Benefits Specialists are also available anytime by appointment and are willing to travel throughout their respective areas. For more information please contact them directly or call toll free at **1-800-449-1439**.

Maddie Anthony (Wichita area) is consistently available at the Newton SRS office on the first and third Tuesday mornings of each month, at the Hutchinson SRS office all day the second Wednesday of each month and at the McPherson SRS office in the afternoon on the first Tuesday of each month.

Don't know what Benefits Specialist covers your area? See the Program web site at www.workinghealthy.org

Frequently Asked Questions...

The following questions & answers, in addition to many others, are available on the program web site, www.workinghealthy.org.

Q: I know that I want to enroll in Working Healthy, now what do I do?

A: An individual can enroll in a number of ways. If you already have an SRS worker, you can contact that person and ask to enroll. You can also contact the Benefits Specialist for your region and request assistance in applying for the program. Or you may call your local SRS office, and request an application. The application form is called an ES-3165. You can also apply for Working Healthy on-line at <http://www.srskansas.org>, click the "Apply for Services" button.

If you want to have an improved understanding of how employment or increased income affects your present benefits, we recommend scheduling a time to meet with a Benefits Specialist to develop a Benefits Plan.

Q: Is there a waiting list or limited number of individuals who can enroll in Working Healthy?

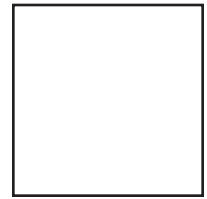
A: No. Working Healthy does not have an enrollment cap or waiting list.

Q: Can an individual's Working Healthy premium be automatically deducted from his or her Social Security check or automatically withdrawn from his or her checking account?

A: No. At this time the computer system used to process Working Healthy premium payments cannot accommodate automatic deductions or withdrawals. Payments should be made using check or money order and sent to: Working Healthy, SRS/FPE, PO Box 1338, Topeka, KS 66601.

WORKING HEALTHY

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Return service requested

This newsletter and other information regarding the Working Healthy can be found on-line at: <http://www.workinghealthy.org>

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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 phone (785) 864-7085, or by E-mail: pixie@ku.edu

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