

WORK Program Now Enrolling

The Work Opportunities Reward Kansans (WORK) program officially began on July 1. WORK provides a package of services, including assessment, personal assistance services, independent living counseling, and assistive services, for individuals with developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, or traumatic brain injury, who are eligible for the Kansas Medicaid Buy-In program, *Working Healthy*. These individuals must meet the same eligibility requirements as for the state home and community based services (HCBS) waivers and must have earnings from employment. WORK is innovative in using a “cash and counseling” model, allowing a direct cash payment to individuals who choose to act as their own fiscal manager.

WORK is designed to provide eligible enrollees with optimum control of their lives by allowing them to purchase personal assistance services in alternative ways that will meet their unique needs using a monthly cash allocation, decide whether they want to self-direct their care or have their care directed, determine whether to use the services of an Independent Living Counselor or manage their care independently, decide whether to use a fiscal management service or act as their own fiscal manager, and choose providers with whom they feel the most comfortable rather than have to use mandated providers based on disability or geographical location.

For further, detailed information about WORK please see “Benefits Specialist Corner” on page 2.

Employment Consultant Joins Working Healthy Staff

Daniel Lassley has joined the staff of *Working Healthy* as an Employment Consultant. His primary responsibilities are to work with employers to educate them about the advantages to and opportunities available in working with people with disabilities; working with the state workforce development system to make sure people with disabilities have access to services and possible job training funds; and helping people with disabilities become better job seekers.



Daniel comes to us from the workforce development system, where he worked with businesses to develop training programs as well as improve their recruitment, hiring and retention. He is excited to help employers solve their staffing problems by recruiting, hiring and training Kansans with disabilities. Daniel also looks forward to working with staff at the various workforce centers across the state to ensure that people with disabilities receive equal access to all appropriate services.

Daniel’s current project involves conducting a series of employer focus group sessions throughout the state. His goal is to identify the top issues for Kansas employers regarding recruitment, hiring and management of people with disabilities. The information gained will be used to refine communications with both employers and job seekers with the aim of addressing concerns and misconceptions, while promoting the tangible benefits to both audiences.

If you are an employer who would like to be involved or have suggestions for Daniel, he can be reached at (785) 368-6454 or Daniel.Lassley@khpa.ks.gov.

Benefits Specialists' Corner

This issue features *Working Healthy* Benefits Specialist Sherri Sherman from the Hays Service Center in northwest Kansas. Sherri's coverage area includes Barton, Cheyenne, Decatur, Ellis, Ellsworth, Gove, Graham, Jewell, Lincoln, Logan, Mitchell, Norton, Osborne, Pawnee, Phillips, Rawlins, Rooks, Rush, Russell, Sheridan, Sherman, Smith, Thomas, Trego and Wallace counties. Sherri can be reached by phone at (785) 628-1066 ext. 268 or by E-mail at HASAS@srs.ks.gov.

On July 1, 2007 the Kansas Health Policy Authority implemented a new state plan package of benefits that will provide personal services, as well as other services, for employed persons with disabilities in Kansas. People who are eligible for the Physical Disability (PD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), or the Developmental Disability (DD) waivers, or are on the waiting lists for these waivers, or who have a disability that would make them eligible for one of these waivers, and who are eligible for the Kansas Medicaid Buy-In program, *Working Healthy*, are eligible to enroll in WORK.

What is it?

WORK is personal assistance services for people with disabilities who are working and, because of their disability need personal supports to work. If you qualify for WORK, a personal care assistant can provide support at home or at work. For many people with disabilities, the key to living independently is having a personal assistant. These are people to help you with your activities of daily living.

What services does it cover?

Personal Assistant Services – Personal services can be paid for via a monthly allocation sent to the individual, the individual's representative, or a paid fiscal manager. WORK participants will be able to determine what services are needed, when they are needed, how they wish to purchase their services, and how much they want to pay for their services. Participants or their representatives who choose to act as their own fiscal agent are responsible for paying all applicable deductions and taxes. Participants who choose not to manage their own funds may still direct their funds via a fiscal agent.

Assistive services – Assistive Services is defined as any item, piece of equipment, or environmental modification, which is used to increase, maintain, or improve independence, employment, and/or health and safety. Purchase or rent of new or used assistive technology is limited to those items not covered by Medicaid under the State Plan. Examples include, but are not limited to, ramps, lifts, modifications to bathrooms and kitchens specifically related to accessibility, and assistive technology that improves communication and/or mobility in the home and work place. Assistive Services also includes any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of assistive technology.

Independent Living Counseling- Independent Living Counseling includes one or more of the following: orientation; self-direction training; fiscal management training; assistance in accessing other systems that will enhance independent living and/or employment; assistance in developing the individualized budget; assistance in locating, interviewing, hiring, supervising, and terminating a personal attendant; assistance in locating emergency back-up care and emergency assistance; assistance in reporting exploitation and/or emotional and/or physical abuse to SRS Adult Protective Services; assistance in locating an maintaining services identified in the service plan; and assistance with dis-enrolling and accessing waiver and /or other services.

How do I learn more?

Mary Ellen Wright and Nancy Scott presented the initial information regarding the WORK program in each of the SRS regions. The target audience was providers and agencies who provide services to Kansans with disabilities. Benefits Specialists will now continue presentations within our coverage areas. If you are interested in finding out more by having an informational training session on WORK in your area, please contact your local *Working Healthy* Benefits Specialist. A full listing of Specialists is available at www.workinghealthy.org or by calling toll-free, 1-800-449-1439.

- Sherri Sherman, *Working Healthy* Benefits Specialist

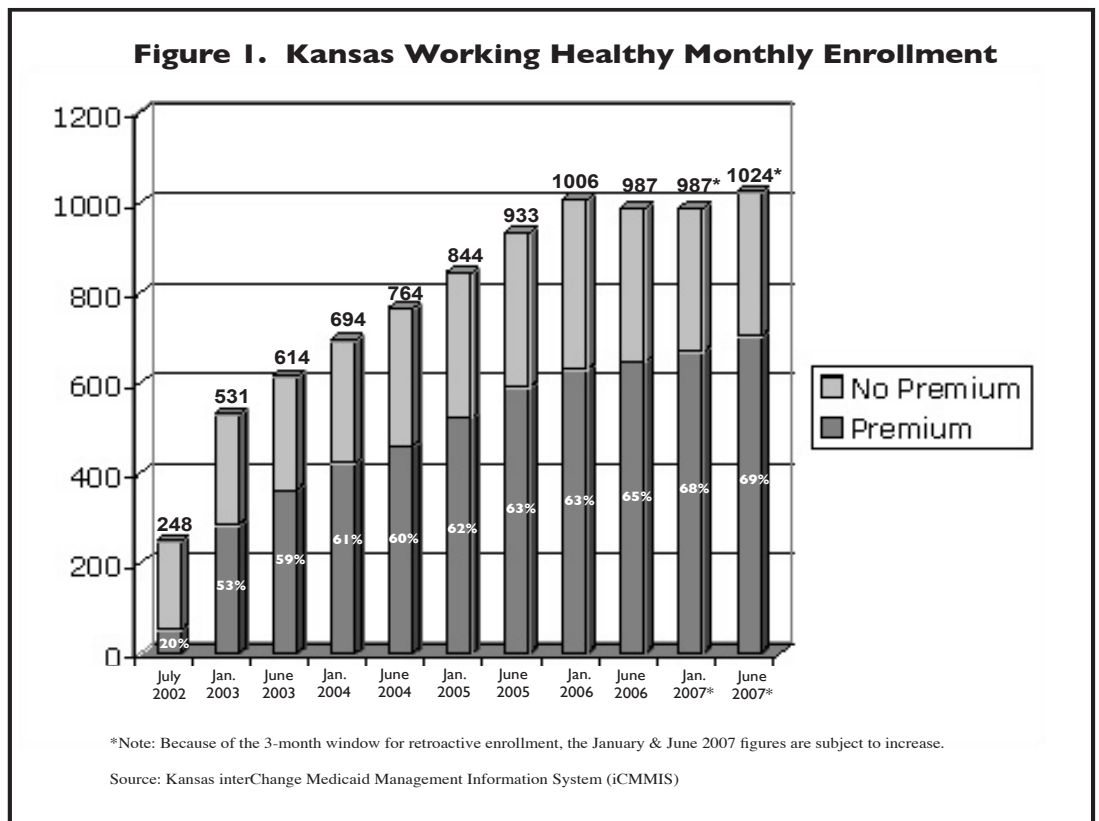
Working Healthy Enrollment & Premium Statistics

By Noelle K. Kurth, KU Evaluation Team

Five years have passed since *Working Healthy* began enrolling participants. Over the years, programmatic changes have been made in consultation with consumers and advocates in hopes of strengthening the program to assist even more Kansans with disabilities to obtain jobs or increase work in order to obtain their preferred lifestyle and level of independence. The personal assistant services made available through the new WORK program are just the most recent example of innovations and improvements made in the program. Through on-going evaluation of *Working Healthy*, policy-makers are able gauge progress made and develop strategies to support Kansans with disabilities as they strive to overcome barriers to employment and self-sufficiency.

Enrollment figures show the program continues to have more participants. Further, the level of income the enrollees in the program are obtaining continues to increase as well; as can be seen from the consistent increase in the percentage of people paying premiums for *Working Healthy* (see Figure 1).

It is our hope that *Working Healthy* will continue to grow as new initiatives for employment emerge from the new Comprehensive Employment Systems grant.



HELP WANTED: When Disaboom.com launches in September of 2007, it will change the world for people with disabilities and functional limitations. Designed by doctors and fellow Disaboomers, Disaboom.com is the first interactive, online community dedicated to providing comprehensive resources for people with disabilities, their caregivers, families, rehabilitation providers and employers. If you or someone you know has a disability or functional limitation or you work with people with disabilities, we want you to join us in helping to create Disaboom.com. Sign up to become a beta tester and let us know what you want to see on Disaboom.com. Log on to: www.disaboom.com/ltmd and become a beta tester. It won't take much time; is completely free; and you even get a free movie download!



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This newsletter and other information regarding *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 calling (800) 449-1439, or by emailing, pixie@ku.edu

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