

CONSUMER VOICES

by Barbara Holsomback, Working Healthy/WORK Enrollee

As a fifty-something professional woman with a recently diagnosed physical disability, I couldn't seem to shake the thought that I must be a bad person or I wouldn't need so much help to do even the most mundane of personal and household tasks.

Not only had my physician told me three years ago that I no longer could work because of my spinal condition, but I'd sit for hours staring at a basket of laundry before I'd get up the courage to ask a friend to help me wash. That was before I discovered *Working Healthy/WORK*, the state program that provides support and services to put people, like me, back to work.

Today, WORK provides me a personal care assistant, who gets paid to do the household and personal tasks that stood in the way of me working. I've returned part-time to the writing, editing and marketing consultation that my disability had stripped from me. I'm the one deciding who to hire or fire as my personal care assistant, and what tasks I need done. In the social work lexicon, that's called self-determination. I call it a way to make me feel free and whole again.

Fuel the Independent Living Passion!

The Kansas Association for Centers for Independent Living (KACIL) is sponsoring the second bi-annual CIL Conference in Kansas, titled "Fuel the Independent Living Passion." The focus of the conference is to provide an opportunity for learning, training and networking among CIL staff and others interested in keeping the independent living movement alive and moving forward in Kansas. Specific topics to be covered include advocacy, deinstitutionalization, and employment. The event will be held in Wichita at the Best Western North Hotel and Suites on November 12th and 13th. Registration is \$80 for KACIL members and \$125 for non-members. *Working Healthy* will be sponsoring a pre-conference workshop the morning of November 12th addressing independent living history, philosophy, and self-direction. For more information contact your local independent living center or Jennifer Schwartz with KACIL at jennifers@kacil.org.

Benefits Specialists' Corner

This issue features *Working Healthy* Benefits Specialist Terry Cronin from the Kansas City area SRS office. Terry covers the Kansas City Metro Area including Leavenworth, Wyandotte, Douglas and Johnson counties. Terry can be contacted by calling (913) 279-7173 or by emailing Terry.Cronin@srs.ks.gov.

Is the WORK program worth the effort?

You're a person with a lifelong disability. You use a wheel chair.

There were people in your life who encouraged you. There were others who didn't. You were defiant and determined to live independently...and work.

You went to school, received a degree and became a licensed Social Worker.

You require personal attendant services (PAS) to assist you with activities of daily living: things like getting out of bed, taking care of personal hygiene, dressing, preparing meals, and so on. You are dependent on these services to be able to live and work. You must pay \$1,800.00 per month for these services out of your pocket. \$21,600.00 per year.

You need more hours of service, but you can't afford them. So you struggle each night to put yourself to bed. You don't go anywhere in the evening, like out to eat or to a movie, because the buses don't run at night and you can't afford more hours for staff to assist you. Most of the weekend you're by yourself. You would like to go to church but...

Some might say "What's the point of working, it's not worth it." But you know it's not about the money. It's about self-worth, pride and personal values. It's about independence and dignity. It's about being productive and contributing your skills and talents to improve your community. And so you continue...

Then you hear about a new program called Work Opportunities Reward Kansans (WORK). It's part of the Kansas Medicaid Buy-in program called *Working Healthy* (WH).

You wonder if this new WORK program could be beneficial to you. You make an appointment with a *Working Healthy* Benefits Specialist. The WH/WORK team and the local SRS office work together to make you a part of the program.

Now you participate in the WH/WORK program and you receive all the benefits of *Working Healthy* including the WORK program. Your PAS are now paid by the program and not out of your pocket. Your hours of service have been increased from 176 to 286 hours per month. These are the additional hours you couldn't afford to pay for. You now have more staff time to help you to bed at night, evening hours for outings and weekend staff to attend church. You are more independent than ever and you see even more possibilities in your life.

The cost of this program to you?...You pay a \$152.00 premium per month.

And what do you do with the \$1,800.00 per month you no longer have to pay out of your pocket for your personal services?...Well...you could go to a movie...

This story is about a real person and this scenario is true. This person has described the WORK program as a "miracle" and a "godsend."

The *Working Healthy*/WORK program is changing lives and if you think you could benefit from it or know someone who could, please contact a Benefits Specialist, call the toll free number, or look us up on the *Working Healthy* web site.

- Terry Cronin, Benefits Specialist

The Disability Program Navigator Initiative

by Jeff Schroder, Kansas Disability Navigator Program Coordinator

Under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA) directed funds and resources to improve workforce services for individuals with disabilities, including those with psychiatric and other non-visible disabilities. Funding for the Disability Program Navigator (DPN) Initiative was made to respond to barriers to One-Stop services including physical and program accessibility, and meaningful and effective participation of job seekers in the workforce investment system.

Beginning in November 2007, the Kansas Department of Commerce - Workforce Development, has hired 5 Disability Program Navigators (one to work in each Local Area), plus one DPN state lead. The Navigators, while working through the local Workforce Centers:

- Guide, train, and support Workforce Center staff in helping people with disabilities access and navigate the complex provisions of various programs that impact their ability to gain/retain employment.
- Develop linkages and collaborate on an ongoing basis with employers to facilitate employment for persons with disabilities.
- Develop partnerships to achieve integrated services, systemic change, and expand the capacity to serve customers with disabilities.
- Facilitate the transition of in or out-of-school youth with disabilities to obtain employment and economic self-sufficiency.
- Conduct outreach to agencies/organizations that serve people with disabilities.
- Serve as resources on Social Security Programs such as: work incentives/employment support programs through its Work Incentives, Planning, and Assistance (WIPA) program; Protection and Advocacy systems (P&As); and employment related demonstration projects.
- Serve as resources on programs that impact the ability of persons with disabilities to enter and remain in the workforce

The Kansas Disability Program Navigator initiative has thus far been very successful throughout the state. Within the Workforce Centers, much needed adaptive equipment has been put in place, and the centers have been evaluated for necessary upgrades in equipment and software. We are continuing to work with Local Operators to help purchase the identified items that are needed to better serve customers. In addition, the Navigators have successfully integrated themselves in to their Primary Workforce Centers throughout the state. They have become valuable resources and team members, working with the many different agencies, employers, service providers, community organizations, and Workforce Center staff, providing support, information, and training in friendly, efficient, and effective ways. Further, Navigators have worked closely with *Working Healthy* staff and Benefits Specialists as they provide training and coordinate referrals.

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'The Disability Program Navigator' Continued from page 3...

Some of the many successes our program is proud of are:

- New and updated adaptive equipment for many of the Workforce Centers throughout the state, and ongoing evaluation and collaboration for purchasing needed equipment in the Workforce Centers where needed.
- We worked closely with the Kansas Commission on Disability Concerns (KCDC) to communicate, schedule, and co-facilitate Disability Employment Resource Training throughout the state to educate WFC staff, and other service providers on different resources available throughout Kansas, and how to access that information, including the KCDC website, KANSAS WORKS website, and the Kansas SHARE Network.
- The Navigators have been very influential in getting SHARE Network Sites identified, trained, and opened to help serve customers.
- Due to the Disability Employment Resource Training and the information that our Disability Program Navigator presented, a connection was made that helped resolve an issue with a medical card for someone in Western Kansas, and communication with a benefits specialist was established.
- We were an integral part of the team who updated the accommodation protocols which are now used within the Workforce Centers throughout the state when requesting and obtaining accommodations for customers accessing the centers, such as interpreter services.
- While using the updated accommodation protocols, the DPN's have been able to help provide interpreters for several deaf customers who have never used the Workforce Center before.
- Helping promote the Workforce Centers and the services they provide, throughout the community, in different presentations, and while attending job and career fairs.
- Working closely with the Rehabilitation School for the Blind; their students are accessing the Workforce Center as part of their independence training, and their input and suggestions have helped us make changes with equipment and procedures to better help customers who are blind or visually impaired.

The Disability Program Navigator Initiative has made a positive impact throughout Kansas as we strive to provide services to all customers who access the Workforce Center. Please contact us if you have any questions, concerns, or need additional information.

- Jeff Schroeder, Topeka, Coordinator (785) 296-0658, jschroeder@kansascommerce.com
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State Considering New Policy to Speed Hiring of People with Disabilities

by Daniel Lassley, Working Healthy Employment Specialist

The State of Kansas is considering a new program designed to encourage the hiring of people with disabilities into Classified Civil Service jobs. Under the terms of the program, a job seeker must meet the “severe disability” definition of Vocational Rehabilitation. Alternatively, disabled veterans may qualify if they have a current disability rating of 50% or more. The proposed program also requires a certification of “work readiness.” The details on this certification are yet to be determined.

Job seekers who meet the requirements for the position may be interviewed and hired directly, bypassing the regular job posting process. This process could save agencies considerable time in filling open positions. Job candidates are to be identified by a database proposed to be developed by the Workforce Centers. Individuals interested in these jobs would need to register either in person at a Workforce Center, or online via the KansasWorks.com website. Again, details on this aspect of the program have not been finalized.

Be on the lookout as this exciting program is approved and the final requirements and processes are revealed. For more information, contact Daniel at daniel.lassley@khp.ks.gov.

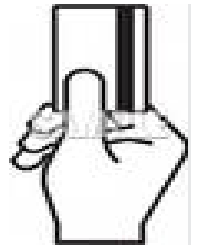
Pay your *Working Healthy* Premium with Automatic Debit

Did you know that KATCO offers automatic debit as a way to pay your *Working Healthy* premium? Your *Working Healthy* premium can be automatically deducted from your bank account on either the 4th or the 20th of each month. There are no fees associated with automatic debit. Many *Working Healthy* Enrollees find automatic debit much easier than remembering to write a check. To sign up for automatic debit, you must fill out a short form and return it to KATCO. For more information about automatic debit, or to request a form, call Mary Ann Newton at 866-465-2826 ext. 104.



New--Permanent Medical Cards

The Kansas Health Policy Authority (KHPA) has launched permanent medical identification cards for Medicaid beneficiaries. Beginning September 1, 2008, the KHPA has issued permanent plastic medical identification cards in place of the previously issued monthly paper cards. The back of the cards will contain a swipecable magnetic stripe that allows access to beneficiary eligibility information through KHPA's Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS). For more information on the Kansas permanent medical ID card, please visit the KHPA website at: <http://www.khp.ks.gov/medicalcard/beneficiary.html>



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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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