



Working Healthy

Making health care work

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Encouraging Positive Attitudes and Outcomes for Youth through Employment

by Ranita Wilks, YEP Coordinator, Independence Inc., Lawrence

The Youth Employment Program (YEP) is a partnership between Independence, Inc. and Lawrence Public Schools (USD 497) to promote and improve employment outcomes for youth ages 15-21 with significant disabilities. The program is funded through a grant from Kansas *Working Healthy*. Independence, Inc., a Center for Independent Living in Lawrence, serves as a “temporary employment agent” for the students. Student participants work 2 hours per day in competitive employment and are paid federal minimum wage. Local employers are recruited to be a two month training site for each student. During this two month work trial, the program hopes the employer offers ongoing employment to the student. If no employment is offered, the student is then moved to another employer for another two month job trial. Lawrence Public Schools provides transportation to and from the job site during school hours. Job Coaches are also provided to help facilitate training for the students and to assist with meeting the needs of the contracted business partner.

One goal of the program is to encourage a positive view of employment versus a lifetime dependency on disability income. YEP began employing students in September 2008. Currently, eight students are participating in the program. One student is presently working two jobs through YEP and is close to being offered permanent employment by one of her job trial sites. The feedback received from school officials, students, and employers is positive. A positive example involves a 15 year old female who is in foster care. According to school staff, the student had exhibited a lack of focus and low self-esteem. After participating in YEP, it was noted by both school officials and the YEP employer that the student’s overall self confidence began to improve. The student was more outgoing and took more interest in her appearance. Another student expressed how proud she feels to earn a paycheck. Before YEP, the student had never received a paycheck. The student works weekly with school staff on developing her skills with money management so she can move and live on her own. Through YEP, we have the opportunity to not only increase job skills for students, but the program also helps students to start developing self-esteem and other soft skills needed for successful transition to adult living.

Benefits Specialists' Corner

This issue features Dan Hallacy from the Pittsburg SRS Office. Dan covers the southeast part of the state including Allen, Anderson, Bourbon, Cherokee, Coffey, Crawford, Franklin, Labette, Linn, Miami, Montgomery, Neosho, Osage, Wilson, and Woodson counties. Dan can be contacted by calling (620) 231-5300 or by emailing Dan.Hallacy@srs.ks.gov.

Working Healthy...is it working?

Enrollment is still climbing. Medicaid costs seem to be dropping for individuals who are enrolled in *Working Healthy*.

So what's next? Have we enrolled everyone in Kansas who can benefit from *Working Healthy*? Not even close. So, how do we contact these people to let them know about this great program that could possibly turn their lives around?

Maybe you, reading this newsletter, are the answer. Do you know anyone who might benefit from this program? Maybe you know someone with a teenager who has a disability that could benefit from *Working Healthy*. Maybe someone you work with might benefit from enrolling in *Working Healthy*. How about giving one of them your copy of this newsletter so he or she can learn more about *Working Healthy*?

There are a number of folks with disabilities who do not utilize Kansas Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) or any of the many other agencies across the state. Information about *Working Healthy* is sometimes difficult to find, so if you could tell at least one friend, family member, or acquaintance about *Working Healthy*, we're all spreading the word. You don't have to relay every detail about the program. Encourage them to contact a Benefit Specialist, SRS worker, or ILC counselor. Try giving them the web address for *Working Healthy* (www.workinghealthy.org) or the toll free number for *Working Healthy* (1-800-449-1439).

Don't discourage anyone who wants to work. Everyone should have the opportunity to work and feel they can make a contribution to the world by working. Don't let them believe misinformation. It is not true that if someone goes to work it will make him or her ineligible for a Social Security check and he or she will lose Medicaid coverage. Encourage people to find the correct information about employment and earnings and how they can impact their Social Security income, medical coverage and other benefits.

In this time of economic downturn *Working Healthy* can be an asset for many folks.

-Dan Hallacy, Benefits Specialist

Greater Kansas City Business Leadership Network Hires Executive Director, Names Board of Directors

by Daniel Lassley, Working Healthy Employment Specialist

Lori Maher has been contracted to serve as the Executive Director of the Greater Kansas City Business Leadership Network (GKCBLN). Ms. Maher operates an association management business which serves several prominent Kansas City area associations, most notably the KC chapter of the Human Resources Management Association.

“Ms. Maher is an accomplished professional who has strong relationships with Human Resources executives throughout Kansas City,” said GKCBLN Board Member Keith Wiedenkeller, senior vice president at AMC Entertainment. “Her experience and connections will enable the BLN to run smoothly and gain new members quickly.”

Joining Wiedenkeller on the GKCBLN Board of Directors is Tim Menne, Human Resources Manager at Pioneer Services; Alice Rogers, AMC Entertainment; Linda Baker, Missouri Governor’s Council on Disabilities; and Kerrie Bacon, Employment Liaison with the Kansas Commission on Disability Concerns.

The GKCBLN was formed to bring business leaders together to share best practices for recruiting, hiring and managing people with disabilities. Its goal is to recruit a large number of employers in the Kansas City area to join the BLN and increase employment opportunities by promoting the business advantages of hiring people with disabilities in competitive, integrated positions. Activities GKCBLN plans to implement include career fairs, disability mentoring and internship programs, and training in such areas as business etiquette, accommodation, and disclosure.

All Things Data...

In December 2008, *Working Healthy* evaluation staff at the University of Kansas published the “Working Healthy Data Chartbook: Evaluation of the Kansas Medicaid Buy-In 2002-2007.” The Chartbook summarizes data collected through surveys with *Working Healthy* enrollees as well as supplemental data from administrative databases during this time period. The Chartbook is available for download on the *Working Healthy* website (http://www.workinghealthy.org/downloads/WorkingHealthyDataChartbook_Dec2008.pdf).

Also in December, a webinar on the use of disability and health-related data in Kansas was co-hosted by *Working Healthy* and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. In an on-going effort to increase cross agency data sharing and stream-line the process for doing so, staff from both agencies have been working to bring stakeholders and researchers together to talk about strategies for sharing and data availability. After *Working Healthy* staff completed a comprehensive inventory of data relevant to disability, health and employment in Kansas (“Data Inventory on the Employment and Health of Kansans with Disabilities,” September 2008), the webinar served to reacquaint stakeholders with efforts being undertaken and identify ways in which to move our efforts further. A video recording of the webinar is available for viewing on the *Working Healthy* website (<http://www.workinghealthy.org/downloads/webinar/index.html>).

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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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