Expand Evidence-Based Supported Employment Programs

Position: In order to increase the number of individuals with serious mental illness who are able to benefit from Evidence-Based Supported Employment, we urge the Kansas Legislature to appropriate $250,000 in new funding to cover costs not reimbursed by Medicaid. We must ensure equal access to supported employment services regardless of where people live.

The Problem: Only 13 of the 26 mental health centers which serve adults with serious mental illness are currently implementing the IPS (Individual Placement & Support) model of evidence-based supported employment. Of the total caseload of 6,937 individuals classified as having a serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI), it is estimated that 60 percent, or 4,161, individuals will be interested in at least part-time employment as part of their recovery plan. Currently, 868 individuals are receiving IPS services. That’s about 20% of the statewide target population. While approximately 90% of the costs of implementing IPS can be covered by Medicaid, many centers lack sufficient revenue to offer the service or to expand their scope.

Why this matters: Employment is a critical ingredient in the recovery of individuals with a serious mental illness. The CMHCs that use the IPS model have demonstrated a 40% placement rate in competitive employment compared to a 15% placement rate by centers that use other methods. As of January 1, 2012, IPS programs along with other evidenced-based mental health practices have helped more than 200 Kansans with serious mental illnesses find employment and retain it for a period of at least 90 days. However, many individuals in the target population are currently being denied equal access to supported employment services due to the limited scope of the program. Kansas should invest in helping people find and be successful in obtaining competitive employment.

The bottom line: Governor Brownback has made employment for individuals with disabilities a priority for his administration at the same time that implementation of the 2011 Employment First legislation is moving forward. IPS has established a proven track record as a Medicaid-reimbursable service that can grow with the implementation of KanCare. Supported Employment should be part of the administration’s economic strategy for getting Kansans back to work.

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The rest of the story about Evidence-Based Supported Employment

- Community Mental Health Centers would have access to the expansion funding based on criteria to be established by KDADS:
  - A primary goal is to increase the number of Supported Employment Specialists who are capable of managing caseloads of 20 individuals seeking employment.
  - A related goal is to reach 50% penetration of the target population with IPS services. CMHCs which are currently offering IPS have achieved an average penetration rate of 34%.

- Expansion costs for IPS are driven largely around having adequate Employment Specialist staff. Approximately 10% of the program’s costs would be supported through the fund to offset job development costs generally not reimbursed by Medicaid. At the level of 50% penetration of the target population, the unreimbursed costs on an annual basis are estimated to be in the range of $656,000. The goal will be to build capacity in the system over time to move toward that level of expansion.

- Unlike traditional treatment services such as psychosocial and attendant care, IPS Supported Employment extends the mental health center into establishing relationships with employers in the community.

- Individuals moving to employment receive individualized and comprehensive benefits planning in order to understand how working will affect current disability and other benefits.

- Supported employment staff function as part of the overall treatment team supporting the individual.

- Eligibility for the program is based on the individual’s choice to seek employment; the job search is based on the individual’s preferences, strengths, and work experiences.

- People with serious mental illness who obtain and retain competitive employment report that they have a better sense of control over psychiatric symptoms, increased satisfaction with finances, increased satisfaction with leisure activities, higher self-esteem, and a sense of belonging and giving back to the community.