



**GERARD L. MICHAUD, President**

February 11, 2025

TO: Senator Renee Erickson, Chair, and Members of the Committee on Government Efficiency

FROM: Gerard L. (Jerry) Michaud, President/CEO, Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas, Inc. (DSNWK)

RE: Hearing on SB 161

Chair Erickson and members of the Committee on Government Efficiency,

My name is Jerry Michaud and I am the President of Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas (DSNWK), a non-profit organization serving 550 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) for over 55 years. I am grateful for the opportunity to share some insights on the IDD system as well as share the critical need for legislative support for these essential community services in Kansas for people with IDD.

Helpful Background: The Community Service System in Kansas began taking root in the 1950s and 1960s with parents urging their local communities to develop resources and supports for their sons and daughters. In Northwest Kansas, DSNWK's beginning was in 1967. That system has stood the test of time because it has been grounded on a bedrock of core principles and values that have helped it remain on mission. Generally, through partnerships between local county commissions and non-profit organizations like DSNWK, the system was created, operated and managed at the local level. These local relationships were connected with state and federal partners, like the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). In the mid 1990's, the Kansas Legislature, embodied these relationships, roles and responsibilities into law and they understood the overlapping responsibilities of organizations who had been effectively serving people with IDD in their local communities across the state both administratively and operatively. The legislature then, and today, have recognized the value and commitment of mission driven organizations like ours across the state. The Developmental Disability Reform Act (DDRA), remains a bedrock, common-sense law, with safeguards to mitigate conflicts, designed to be the strong base for the community IDD services.

Roles/Functions: Organizations like DSNWK serve in multiple capacities, including that of a Community Developmental Disability Organization (CDDO) as well as providing services. In the CDDO system, the processes and expectations are applied similarly for all organizations who provide service within the CDDO area and all are evaluated consistently and thoroughly through a comprehensive quality assurance (QA) process. KDADS staff are informed of all of these QA

**Live with  
Purpose.**

efforts and outcomes. In addition, KDADS and CDDOs participate in another quality assurance process referred to as the Peer Review process. This Peer Review process is designed to ensure the system is operating well, and is another mitigating factor regarding potential conflicts of interest. Our “interest”, as an organization from our beginning through today, is embodied in our mission - to ensure the principles of the DDRA are honored and that people with IDD have choice. Implementing services that support those choices, in the best way possible, is the desired outcome of that interest.

Most of us wear multiple hats in our daily lives. Living in northwest Kansas, ask any farmer or rancher (or other business owner) and they'll reflect the prudence of this as a factor of success. They are administrators, planners, mechanics and front line workers; you name it and they are engaged in doing the important work. By wearing multiple hats, their costs are better managed, they are more nimble, effective and efficient and you can see it in the fruit that results. I believe this is also true for our current Kansas IDD service system, where the funding to cover those costs comes through the Kansas Legislature. The initiatives to modernize should not mean abandoning that which is grounded, mitigated and working. There are many aspects of the IDD community service system that, in the name of modernizing, are being targeted for substantive change. The many system-change webinars provided by KDADS or their contractors have generated more questions than answers and have resulted in real concerns about the consequential impact these changes would have on individuals with IDD and the provider system serving them. These include the changed rate payment structure tied with the new Medicaid Functional Eligibility Instrument (MFEI) assessment; Unbundling of Day Services with concerning definitions; Targeted Case Management; and others where stated expectations have changed, then changed again with communication that strains confidence in the state's plan. Unfortunately, questions and responses raised regarding the many uncertainties have been characterized as a system simply resistant to change.

**Direct Legislative involvement and support is vital to ensure that the Kansas plan for meeting CMS requirements is one that engages the IDD service system in developing practical and accomplishable solutions.** A relevant and common phrase important for individuals with IDD is, ‘Nothing about us, without us’ and this is true for the IDD service system and any initiatives put into place to modernize it. **We remain diligent in our long-standing commitment to working collaboratively with the Legislature, the state of Kansas and KDADS in serving and supporting essential community services for persons with IDD - something that does not stop when circumstances are difficult.**

Our Mission to serve people with IDD in Northwest Kansas continues as does our need for Legislative oversight and support of the IDD community system; necessary to ensure our system remains strong. Thank you for your leadership in these extraordinary times. On behalf of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and the staff throughout the state who support them - Thank you!



## KDADS & CDDO SYSTEM VALUES

*As a resource to all who enter our doors, our primary focus is to help all individuals eligible for the I/DD service system to be successful, independent, and to experience their very best life. System partners will work together by applying the below values to guide the I/DD system to this fundamental goal.*

## History of the I/DD & CDDO System

Beginning in the 1950's, parents of children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) urged their communities to develop local resources and supports for their sons and daughters. Communities responded by developing community-based nonprofit organizations and with time, children with I/DD were integrated into public education. State leaders helped implement these changes by providing increased levels of funding for these community efforts.

The 1970's saw passage of key Federal acts promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as an increasing realization that institutional models were outdated and out of alignment with emerging societal values of diversity, integration and inclusion.

In 1995, the passage of the Kansas Developmental Disability Reform Act (DDRA) sought to integrate Kansans with I/DD as fully participating citizens in their community. The Act contains four guiding principles for supporting persons with I/DD, engaging them in work and activities that maximize their abilities:

- Independence
- Integration
- Inclusion
- Productivity

As a result of the combined efforts of the State and communities during the past four decades, a vibrant network of support has been developed to aid persons with I/DD to live independent and productive lives in Kansas communities of their choice.



## CDDOs Today

A Community Developmental Disability Organization (CDDO) is designated by each county as the single point of entry for I/DD services (KSA 19- 4001 et seq). Under this relationship, these quasi-governmental organizations have served as the local point of contact for individuals with I/DD in their catchment area. As a provision of the DDRA, a CDDO has been designated for every area of the state to help coordinate services and supports for individuals with I/DD.

In Kansas, CDDOs are responsible for determining whether a person qualifies for services, working with the person and/or the person's family or guardian in choosing from service options and referring those persons to other agencies if additional supports are needed.

Learn more: <https://kdads.ks.gov/>



## → **1. Transparency**

As system leaders, we will be attentive listeners and engaged with one another through open, honest, proactive, straightforward and transparent communication.

## → **2. Value our Communities and IDD system**

Recognizing mutual strengths and challenges, with common focus on the individuals with I/DD, as good stewards we will achieve success through our combined strengths.

## → **3. A Culture of Continuous Improvement**

Drawing upon historical perspectives and experiences - as trusted system partners, we will achieve quality outcomes, bridge the gaps caused by turnover and avoid unnecessary struggles, confusion, and distrust.

## → **4. Collaboration**

We will work together, listen to each other and advocate together for the common good of the community system for which we are mutually responsible and accountable to lead and guide.

## → **5. Focus on Data, Outcomes, & Accountability**

Purpose-determined and Purpose-driven data lead to best practices with best outcomes and ensure functionality and accountability.

## → **6. Ethics**

Together, with openness and honesty, we will do the right thing in the right way, always. Together we will develop policies and practices that are user-friendly, consistent, and necessary.

## → **7. Celebrate Success**

We will watch for the good and celebrate it together.

## → **8. Break through the Roadblocks**

With collective thought and voice we will plan and push through adversities with grace and purpose. Thoughtful to cause no harm, we will embrace budget and system needs to determine priorities and innovate with creativity to find needed solutions.

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## KDADS & CDDO SYSTEM VALUES

### DDRA System Values

**System Goal:** *As a resource to all who enter our doors, our primary focus is to help all individuals eligible for the IDD service system to be successful, independent, and to experience their very best life. System partners will work together by applying the below values to guide the system to this fundamental goal.*

#### Transparency

We value open, honest, and transparent communication. We, as a collective system, built upon principles of local control and management, strive for excellence in communication through proactive thinking, straightforward communication, honesty, trust, and attentiveness. Working collaboratively is essential to ensuring all stakeholders look forward, engage, and listen as a group.

As informed and collaborative partners, applying our core values and principles, we embrace new ideas, feedback, and discussion while meeting regulatory, funding, and system needs and requirements. Although difficult at times, inclusivity, open communication, and education are essential to our growth.

#### Value our Communities and IDD system

As partners, we all have difficult roles. We must recognize and value individuals with disabilities and the network that supports their lives in their communities, ensuring that each decision made is the best one for the person served.

We will engage and collaborate with stakeholders to ensure continued success.

We strive, through good stewardship and advocacy, to make sure that each community has the resources needed to support those who call that community home.

#### A Culture of Continuous Improvement

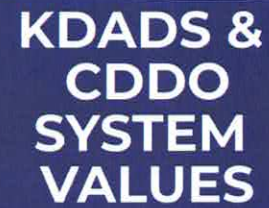
As a group, we challenge ourselves to be good stewards, while working cooperatively toward common goals and to seek the straightforward and simple path needed.

By focusing on our strategic goals and vision, while maintaining mutual trust and responsibilities, we will avoid unnecessary struggles.

Proactive information sharing is essential to success. Drawing upon the valuable historical perspectives and experiences of our system partners, we will bridge the gaps created by turnover or leadership transition that impact all aspects of our IDD system operations.

Collaborative communication and inclusion in meetings with MCOs, KDADS, and CDDOs is a priority and results in a strong, focused, and effective community service system. Quality outcomes are achieved in place of unnecessary struggles, confusion and distrust that results when partners are excluded.



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## KDADS & CDDO SYSTEM VALUES

### **Collaboration**

Engaging with persons served, communities, and stakeholders is essential to helping understand what resources are needed, what resources are available, and what the future of the system is shaping to be.

We will actively seek out input and involvement from these and other valued stakeholders. We will work together for the common good of the system it serves, not because we're required to but more importantly because we value the wisdom and contributions others bring to the table.

### **Focus on Data, Outcomes & Accountability**

Our planning and decisions will rely on purpose-driven data. Data will be used to make decisions and ensure accountability. Vital to achieving desired outcomes, we will work together to identify needed data points, understand different perspectives and requirements, and determine the best way to collect and efficiently manage the collection process – ensuring it is user-friendly, consistent, and necessary.

### **Ethics**

Together, with openness and honesty, we will do the right things in the right way. By developing policies that incorporate our principles and values, with renewed trust and confidence, together we will shape our system, with focus on the greater good, guarding against the diversion of focus and energies to developing burdensome policy applied to all to correct the few.

### **Celebrate Success**

As system leaders, valuing progress and positive outcomes, we will learn from our challenges and seek creative solutions together. We will recognize our successes, small and large, as we foster strong teamwork that best serves the common good for our customers, clients and partners.

### **Break through the Roadblocks**

We will accept challenges with grace and a willingness to push through barriers while not causing harm. We will take time to think through barriers using the strength of the system and minimizing the use of short-term fixes that are not beneficial in the long term.

We will use our collective voice to push through roadblocks and overcome hurdles including those regarding budget, system needs, and conflicting priorities. Our collective support of the IDD system will ensure needs are understood, effectively communicated and complementary to the strategic vision.

When faced with adversity, we will innovate with creativity and find solutions.