



Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities

SAM BROWNBACK, Governor
KATHLEEN BRENNON, Chairperson
STEVE GIEBER Executive Director
sgieber@kcdd.org

Docking State Office Bldg., Rm 141,
915 SW Harrison Topeka, KS 66612
785/296-2608 * 1-877-431-4604 (toll free)
www.kcdd.org

*"To ensure the opportunity to make choices regarding participation in society
and quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities"*

Testimony on Employment First

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I am Steve Gieber, the Executive Director of the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities. The Council is made up of self-advocates, family members, state agencies, and our partners identified in the Federal Developmental Disabilities Act.

Federal and state laws created the Council to advise policymakers on issues that impact people with disabilities and their families. The Council is very concerned about the Employment First Law.

Prior to coming to work for the Council I spent my entire 32 years working to increase the number of employed Kansans with disabilities.

I have attended a few of the Employment First meetings. What I have found was a group of citizens volunteering their time to carry out the mission that they were charged with in the law. My observations were that the Commission was very engaged in the process; holding scheduled meetings and generating documentation of the work they are producing.

Our current system isn't working we're rewarding the wrong things; too many people are unemployed and we have a waiting list that isn't moving.

The Council believes that the Commission should be charged to work with the state agencies and other interested parties to develop a systems change plan that will lead to the employment outcomes we want. Many of the other states that have Employment First Laws have developed multi-year plans to make the changes necessary to make employment work in their States.

For example, Washington State has a multi-year plan with steps leading up to the changes necessary to achieve real systems change with goals and a timetable.

The Commission needs to be grassroots based, accountable, and directed to develop both the plan and the systemic changes that are needed to achieve real employment outcomes. Reporting should be required and directed at developing the plan and the accountability to move the system towards employment outcomes for people.

I have attached a Policy Research Brief on “Commonly Used State Employment measures in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Services.”

As you can see there are three data sources showing how Kansas is doing on employment.

- In the ICI National Survey of Day and Employment Services Kansas is ranked 29th out of the 50 states.
- In the Rehabilitation Service Administration Case Service report Kansas ranks 49th out of the 50 states and the DC area.
- The American Community Survey ranks Kansas 5th.

The point I would like to make is the employment of people with disabilities is a team effort and many different people and organizations are working on it.

The current system of services is not achieving the result Kansas needs for its citizens with disabilities. What we really need is a coordinated plan and the accountability to implement the plan.

Attachment: Policy Research Brief

<http://ici.umn.edu/products/prb/221/default.html>

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A Review of Commonly-Used State Employment Measures in Intellectual and Developmental Disability Services

... As a current grassroots movement, Employment First aims to increase the employment of people with disabilities **through changes in policy, practices, and expectations** of the disability support system and many other stakeholders, including people with disabilities and their family members. Employment First seeks to make employment in the community alongside employees without disabilities, earning minimum or prevailing wage, the first and preferred outcome for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (Niemiec, Lavin, & Owens, 2009; Kiernan, Hoff, Freeze, & Mank, 2011).

The Employment First movement is gaining momentum. Employment First policies affecting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have been legislatively passed or administratively **approved in 18 states**, and many other states have ongoing initiatives but no official policy at this time (Hoff, 2012)

This *Policy Research Brief* provides an overview and description of commonly-used state employment outcome measures in intellectual and developmental disability services, policy, and research. Using the most current research, it also provides a state-by-state summary and cross-state comparison of these measures. Implications to policy, practice, and research are also discussed.

State Employment Outcomes and Rankings

Table 2 presents employment outcomes achieved by each state across the identified data sources. As can be seen, there is considerable state-by-state variability within each data source. Additionally, the number of states reporting data varied; the *NCI* had 15 states participating in the most recent year, the *ICI National Survey of Day and Employment Services* had 41 states providing data, whereas data for all states and the District of Columbia were available from *RSA-911* and *ACS*.

State rankings of employment outcomes differ across the four data sources, reflecting differences in sample size, margin of error, and even definitions of variables being measured. These differences explain why, for example, *NCI* ranked Oklahoma highest in people receiving intellectual and developmental disability services working in community jobs, while the *ICI National Survey of Day and Employment Services* ranked Washington State highest in achieving integrated employment for people receiving day and employment services, *RSA-911* ranked Delaware highest in the rehabilitation rate for people with intellectual disabilities, and *ACS* ranked North Dakota highest in the employment rate among people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These apparent “firsts” vary from one source to another because of differences in what the sources measure and how they measure it. Taken together, the four data sources certainly add value by providing more information about state employment outcomes than any one source could. However, readers must avoid over-generalizing from limited data

that varies in content from one source to another.

Table 2: State Employment Outcomes by Data Source

State	<i>National Core Indicators: Consumer Survey (NCI) (2010-2011)</i>			<i>ICI National Survey of Day and Employment Services (FY 2010)</i>		
	Community Job	N	State Rank	Integrated Employment	N	State Rank
KS	-	-	-	15%	6,217	29

Sources: Human Services Research Institute & The National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services, 2012; Institute for Community Inclusion, n.d.; Erickson, Lee, & von Schrader, 2012.

Table 2: State Employment Outcomes by Data Source (continued)

State	<i>Rehabilitation Services Administrative Case Service Report (RSA-911) (FY 2010)</i>			<i>American Community Survey: Cognitive Disability (2010)</i>			
	Rehabilitation Rate	N	State Rank	Employment Rate	Margin of Error (90%)	N	State Rank
KS	36%	479	49	33.5%	3.93	678	5

Employment outcome data is an important ingredient in effective advocacy, research, and policy advancement. As this study shows, the intellectual and developmental disability policy, advocacy, and research communities are fortunate to have easy access to a number of data sources to monitor employment progress and to build a case for more effective employment supports and services. In doing so, users of these data sources have a responsibility to use the existing data accurately. This requires an understanding of the data, including the purpose and scope of the data sets, different definitions of the employment outcome, and the target populations.

Finally, it is necessary to recognize that the employment rate across the various data sources is a narrow view of a large issue. Merely having a job does not mean that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities work enough hours, earn enough in wages, or perform the type of work they want. As the advocacy, policy, and research communities look to broad indicators to support better employment opportunities, they must remember the importance of employment and quality support services.