

Executive Director
Gerald T. (Jerry) Henry
jhenry@asnek.org

Associate Director
Dave Hager
dhager@asnek.org

Board of Directors
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Elmer Fangman,
Michael McGuire
Dian Henderson
Fr. Jeremy Hepler



Achievement Services empowers persons with disabilities in their quest to live, work, and pursue leisure activities as independently as possible.

P.O. Box 186
Atchison, KS 66002
Website: www.asnek.org

Administrative Offices
215 N. 5th Street
913-367-2432

Workshop
215 N. 5th Street
913-367-0760

Residential Sites
417 N. 6th Street
Mall Towers

February 12, 2020

Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Jerry Henry and I am the Executive Director of Achievement Services for Northeast Kansas, Inc. located in Atchison, Kansas. My testimony today is in support of Senate Bill 348.

Article 7 of the Kansas Constitution states that the State of Kansas should provide for the benefit of the mentally or physically incapacitated or handicapped persons and such other benevolent institutions as the public good may require, shall be fostered and supported by the state.

The State of Kansas for many years was looked upon and held in high regard as a model state and a leader in providing Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) for Kansans with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

I was hired as the first Executive Director for Achievement Services in 1978 to establish and develop community based opportunities for developmentally disabled individuals and their families. At that point and time, I clearly remember that over 4,000 Kansas residents with developmental disabilities lived in State of Kansas operated institutions. State Institutions that were operated 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by state employees. These state employees were well paid and enjoyed good benefits as compared to their peers in their communities. Being a state employee at a state hospital was a good job.

The establishment of the HCBS waiver program was to provide a choice for individuals and their families to live as independently as possible in the community of their desire. More and more state hospital beds were converted to the HCBS program and eventually two state hospitals in Norton and Winfield were closed. It was discussed many times by families and state legislators that while the state was moving away from providing the day to day operation of programs that there would always be a need for support from the state legislature.

It is vitally important that the Kansas Legislature support Senate Bill 348 and provide community programs with the funding that we need. You have heard from providers of medical services for Medicaid patients express to you that Medicaid reimbursement rates are too low and that they have to make up for those losses by charging other patients higher fees. Community HCBS providers have no other patients to spread our losses to. Almost everyone we serve in our programs are Medicaid funded, there are no other paying sources available to recoup our losses. Community HCBS providers do not have taxing authority, we cannot impose a tax to shore up our funding. Community HCBS providers operate programs and services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We do not have the option of cutting hours to save money.

Our only ability to access additional federal funds to operate our programs has to come through the Kansas Legislature. The Kansas Legislature has to put up the 40% matching funds before we can receive the additional 60% in federal funding. No matching funds, No additional federal funding.

As you can tell from my testimony here today. For community HCBS providers to receive any additional revenue for our services and programs, we are at the total mercy of the Kansas Legislature.

Please support Senate Bill 348!

Thank You