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February 19, 2021

Re: HB 2373, mobile crisis services program for individuals with intellectual or developmental disability

Honorable Representative Brenda Landwehr
Health and Human Services Committee Members

Hello,

I am Kendra Krier, I am here today to talk to you about serving people in rural communities who struggle with complex needs. I have been at OCCK for 14 years, and I am the Director of Regional Services in North Central Kansas.

Who are we? OCCK provides services in a 9 county area of north central Kansas to about 3,500 people per year and employs about 300 staff. Our services are designed to help people live independently in their communities. OCCK serves anyone with any type of short term or long-term disability. We serve people of all ages from birth to end of life. 43% of the people we serve with intellectual disabilities also have a mental health disability.

Today, I would like to talk to you about serving people with complex needs and give you a brief update on the gentleman I talked about last year. OCCK strives to put together an array of supports that people need to be successful at home and in their jobs.

Last year I talked to you about a 48-year-old man, who lived in southeast Kansas. His disabilities included brain injury, severe diabetes, physical disability, multiple mental health diagnosis and a history of physical aggression. He moved to Concordia in December 2019. In the first year we assisted him through, 6 emergency room visits where he had a mental health screening with each visit and was turned away, 16 emergency telemedicine calls with his psychiatrist that constantly adjusted his medications, belongings in his apartment destroyed from anger, and no sleep. The first week he struggled, people spent days and nights working with him. We pulled together a team of people that specialize in crisis situations. The OCCK team consisted of direct support professionals, a nurse, a Licensed Master Social Worker for therapy, Psychiatrist, and an Independent Living Specialist who all spent hours each day supporting him and navigating the different avenues to keep him in his home. Everyone was able to help him avoid getting sent off and admitted into an institution. I am so proud to tell you his team has supported him in his home, his medications have been regulated, he is happy and healthy, and doing well.

In July of 2020, we received a call from a Care Coordinator with a 20-year-old man with Autism in a crisis. He was living in a home in north central Kansas with dirt floors, no running water, and minimal food. He was unable to communicate any of his wants or needs, and was ripped from his home and living with his para from school. While in the home he was subjected to drugs, alcohol, physical abuse, and inconsistent medications. We were able to meet with the young man and his para, pull our team of specialists in, and transition him into services in less than 48 hours. He came with a blanket, a pair of headphones, and a few clothes. In the 7 months he has been with OCCK, he has learned how to communicate with an iPad, is up to saying 25-30 words, has learned how to make simple meals, has met with doctors to regulate his medications, attended therapy with sand, music, and art, and he is finally in control of his life.

We are asking you to support teams of people like we have at OCCK.

OCCK has worked hard to be a leader in rural areas to meet people's needs in the community. We work in a community model where we go and meet the person's needs in their home during a crisis, by pulling an array of services together to support people. We are boots-on-the-ground running to support people and collaborating to layer on supports with community partners, such as the MCOs, Central Kansas Mental Health Center, Pawnee Mental Health, and other Mental Health Centers, local hospitals, and local law enforcement.

OCCK will continue to utilize verbal and non-verbal strategies to help keep people and others as safe as possible in crisis situations by applying grounding techniques for remaining calm during an emotionally charged intervention or conversation, such as communicating empathy, validation, and concern as well as assessing a person's well-being and need for further support.

We are asking you for your support to be able to continue to coordinate specialized teams to provide needed services in rural communities.

Thank you for listening. I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Kendra Krier