



Kansas Disability Caucus 2022

Executive Summary

2022 Kansas Disability Caucus - Executive Summary

Together We Rise, United in Action!

Background and Overview

In August of 2022, about 200 disability advocates gathered at the Hotel Topeka at City Center in Topeka for the 16th Kansas Disability Caucus! People of all ages and from across the state experienced this three-day Caucus that focused on uniting voices to promote inclusion and integration of all people with disabilities. The purpose of the Caucus is to develop new disability leadership in Kansas, to educate Kansans with disabilities about the process of policy making and encourage their participation in it, and to determine major issues facing Kansans with disabilities and possible solutions for these issues. The Caucus started in 1988 where about ninety people gathered in Salina. In 1993, the Caucus was moved to Topeka and grew in attendance numbers, and subsequent years have followed. Each Caucus has had its own unique highlights and topics of discussion over the years, ranging from attendant care to employment, from transportation to health insurance. The Caucus is held every two years.

This year, Caucus attendees gathered to work for real change, to develop priority issues and specific solutions, and get educated on important issues. Breakout sessions focused on advocacy, employment, housing, transition, decision making, and more. Caucus Regional Sessions allowed for the opportunity to talk about issues in different parts of the state (see overview below). Attendees heard from empowering keynote speakers Stephanie Woodward, Phillip McGruder, and Colin Olenick. All who were present felt the power of a community that unites for change and equality!

For more information about the Kansas Disability Caucus, Inc., contact Lou Ann Kibbee, Board Chairperson, at kansasdisabilitycaucus@gmail.com or 785-415-2366.

Caucus Sessions

Kansas disability rights advocates attended West, East, or Central Caucus regional sessions. These attendees included people with all types of disabilities and of all ages, disability rights advocates, and disability service providers. Each region was assigned the task of figuring out what people with disabilities need in order to live a life of freedom and choice in their homes and communities. Session attendees also discussed solutions to every issue facing the community. Below are suggested solutions for areas of concern set as priorities during these sessions:

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Include people with disabilities in all decisions affecting the lives of Disabled People
- Actively solicit the testimonies of constituents with disabilities and provide an ongoing way for people with disabilities to express their feedback and concerns

Education

- Provide in-service and continuing education opportunities to teachers that includes instruction in Disability Pride, Inclusion, and History
- Increase retention strategies for Special Education teachers, including recognition, spotlighting, and honoring
- Increase accountability of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to ensure that students with disabilities are receiving quality transition plans and are being connected to community-based services and supports (e.g., Transition Councils)
- Increase the number of translators and service providers who can also provide American Sign Language (ASL) and

- Spanish translation services by working with colleges to increase access to training courses and scholarships
- Increase access to paraprofessional supports and services available to college students with disabilities

Employment

- Increase marketing and education outreach efforts on work incentive programs for people with disabilities, including Working Healthy, Work Opportunities Reward Kansans (WORK), and Supports and Training for Employing People Successfully (STEPS)
- Increase education and outreach efforts, including increased access to benefits specialists, to teach people with disabilities how they can achieve earnings and savings without affecting their benefits
- Increase employment training services and supports for people with disabilities that provide substantial gainful activity / opportunities to earn livable wages
- Increase education outreach efforts to train employers on how to access incentives for employing people with

Caucus Sessions (continued)

disabilities, provide accommodations, and make their workplaces accessible

- Establish increased incentives to motivate employers to hire people with disabilities

Guardianship and Supported Decision Making

- Provide ongoing education, training, and support to parents/caregivers of infants and children with disabilities
- Educate families and Transition Counselors on the alternatives to guardianship, including Supported Decision Making, that highlights testimonies from people with disabilities of why guardianship limits their rights and their experiences in using Supported Decision Making

Healthcare

- Increase education to healthcare providers on how to provide disability competent care and how to make healthcare facilities accessible
- Increase access to mental health crisis services/supports
- Increase amount of medical appointment time scheduled for patients with disabilities receiving Medicaid, especially during scheduled visits with primary care physicians
- Increase access to healthcare providers and facilities in rural areas
- Revisit funding for Low Volume Hospital (LVH) payment adjustments

Housing

- Increase the number of affordable and accessible housing options
- Increase the availability of affordable & accessible housing options that are in safe areas (i.e., don't have a lot of crime)
- Establish an agency that actively monitors if new housing developments meet legal accessibility requirements (e.g., ADA and Fair Housing Act) immediately before and after construction so that complaints and associated consequences may be filed and enacted in a timely manner
- Establish state incentives for building accessible units and keeping accessible units vacant for people with disabilities
- Establish a task force with the state housing authorities that involves people with disabilities and advocates to study the current state of affordable and accessible housing in KS

Medicaid Expansion

- Solicit video testimonies from people with disabilities of what Medicaid Expansion means to them and disseminate testimonies to stakeholders (e.g., HCBS KanCare Oversight Committee and Alliance for a Healthy Kansas)
- Review legislation from neighboring states and associated methods utilized to pass Medicaid Expansion

Personal Assistance Services

- Establish rate parity to ensure wage consistency across all disability waivers
- Increase payrate and employment benefits for personal

care assistants to reduce turnover of trained staff and stabilize care for people with disabilities

- Increase workforce visibility through education and outreach to potential workers
- Provide training supports for people who choose to self-direct their care (e.g., wound care, catheter training, transfer techniques)
- Create strategies to reduce the time spent on Kansas HCBS waitlists

Public Infrastructure

- Increase marketing and education outreach efforts to businesses on ADA laws and why compliance is important to people with disabilities
- Establish an agency that actively works towards increasing accountability and implementing associated consequences for businesses and public spaces not following the ADA
- Require statewide disability awareness training as part of all first responder orientations and trainings (EMT, fire fighters, law enforcement)
- Increase access to reliable and affordable high-speed internet for people with disabilities

Social Security Administration

- Increase training for KS Social Security Administration (SSA) employees in all processes to improve long wait times, poor customer service, and communication with SSA directly and KS benefits specialists (e.g., Working Healthy)
- Assess KS Social Security Administration (SSA) employee competence through periodic performance reviews
- Eradicate reductions in Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits that can occur if a beneficiary with a disability marries another SSI beneficiary or a person not in the SSI program

Transportation

- Create a planning strategy for emergency/staff shortage preparedness to increase the reliability of transportation and decrease transportation no-shows or cancellations
- Establish incentives for transportation providers when they meet transportation reliability standards
- Increase training and pay for drivers providing transportation to people with disabilities
- Provide transportation through Kansas HCBS waivers to support transportation needs outside of medical or employment transportation
- Create a task force with disability transportation / paratransit services (e.g., MetroAccess) that involves people with disabilities and advocates to discuss feedback and concerns
- Provide transportation vouchers for people with disabilities to access ridesharing services (e.g., Uber and Lyft), especially for people living in rural areas
- Establish options for people with disabilities to access 24/7 transportation



Award Recipients

Grassroots Advocate

Awarded To: **JULIA CONNELLIS**

For her commitment as a grassroots advocate to increase access and independence for Kansans with disabilities.

Roger Frischenmeyer Peer Mentor

Awarded To: **ANTHONY FRISCHENMEYER, STEPHANIE SANFORD**

For being a dedicated mentor and advocate for Kansans with disabilities.

Community Achievement

Awarded To: **LABETTE HEALTH**

For their commitment to ensuring access and promoting health of Kansans with disabilities.

Government Achievement

Awarded To: **REPRESENTATIVE JASON PROBST**

For his commitment and dedication to ensuring independence and access for Kansans with disabilities.

Youth up to age 19

Awarded To: **ISABEL EINWICH**

For being a strong advocate for access and independence of youth with disabilities in Kansas.

Youth between ages 20 and 30

Awarded To: **SHANE LEWIS**

For being a strong advocate for access and independence of young adults with disabilities in Kansas.

Lifetime Achievement

Awarded To: **KATHY LOBB**

For a lifetime of commitment to advocating for the independence, rights, and freedom of Kansans with disabilities.

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