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KDADS Awarded Grant to Expand Supported Employment Services for Individuals with Mental Illness in Wichita and Southwest Kansas

TOPEKA – The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has awarded the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) a grant to expand Individual Placement and Support (IPS) employment services to individuals suffering from a severe mental illness, including those with a mental illness and co-occurring substance disorder.

“One of Governor Brownback’s priorities has been to expand employment opportunities for individuals faced with serious challenges,” KDADS Secretary Kari Bruffett said. “These services will help individuals with serious mental illness and co-occurring mental and substance-use disorders to obtain meaningful employment and lead productive, fulfilling lives.”

“IPS has been extensively researched and proven to be effective. What we expect to accomplish with this grant is to strengthen the existing infrastructure needed to expand supported employment services across the state,” Secretary Bruffett said.

The Enhancing Supported Employment in Kansas (ESEK) project is built around IPS Supported Employment, an evidenced-based approach that supports people in their efforts to achieve steady employment in mainstream competitive jobs, either part-time or full-time.

The KU Center for Mental Health Research and Innovation will assist KDADS with the implementation of the ESEK project. The KU Center for Public Partnerships & Research will be utilized to carry out the evaluation of the project. Staff will work with community mental health centers to implement IPS supported employment practice in two distinct communities, an urban site and a rural site. Each implementation site will provide supported employment services to a minimum of 25 clients during the project’s first year.

The ESEK Project incorporates four primary system and service-delivery innovations:

- Expansion of IPS Supported Employment services to non-Medicaid clients
- Inclusion of paid Employment Peer mentors within each implementation site
- Establishment of a statewide supported employment steering committee and the development of local supported employment steering committees
- Provision of supported employment services through video teleconferencing.

The project will be implemented at Comcare in Wichita and the Compass Behavioral Health Center in Southwest Kansas, headquartered in Garden City.

The amount of the grant for the first year is \$798,738. The amount of funding for this program over the five-year life of the grant will total \$3.967 million.

Using this funding, KDADS will convene a statewide Supported Employment Coordinating Committee to organize projects across several state agencies to promote and sustain supported employment. Grant funds will also be used also to develop "robust" supported employment programs in Wichita and Southwest Kansas, to establish a permanent training program using in-person and virtual platforms and to collect and analyze program data.

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