



February 15, 2019

TO: Senator Gene Suellentrop and
Members of the Bob Bethell Joint Committee on Home
and Community Based Services and KanCare Oversight

FR: Matt Fletcher, Executive Director, InterHab

RE: Eligibility Determination Challenges to I/DD Service Providers

Chairman Suellentrop and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share information about the challenges Kansans with intellectual and developmental disabilities face in navigating the Medicaid eligibility determination process. Obtaining and maintaining Medicaid services can be an arduous process for these individuals. Difficulties caused by the State's KanCare Clearinghouse have needlessly compounded those difficulties and caused undue stress to Kansans with I/DD and the professionals who support them.

Since the creation of the Clearinghouse, InterHab members have expressed frustration with the State's contracted vendor for eligibility determination. Challenges appear to break into the categories of timeliness, responsiveness, competency and transparency. We recently surveyed our members and found that:

- 25% of respondents indicated that delays in eligibility determination are always an issue when dealing with the Clearinghouse. Another 54% indicated that delays were moderately to frequently an issue.
- 92% of respondents have experienced competency issues with Clearinghouse staff, with 67% indicating that it has been an issue either moderately or frequently when dealing with staff.
- 95% of respondents indicated difficulty in receiving timely communication. 52% stated it was a frequent issue.

Further, our members shared examples of their frustrations in working with the KanCare Clearinghouse on behalf of Kansans with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

"There have been numerous times when the service coding has been changed making the individual ineligible for services. After numerous attempts to communicate to the Clearinghouse staff, I have had to take it to the Ombudsman to correct this error. We have also had the Clearinghouse assign a client obligation but neglect to notify the guardian/payee of said obligation."

"Clearinghouse workers usually do not have the knowledge of I/DD waiver or the nuances that waiver services create with eligibility. Usually have to bypass the Clearinghouse to get issues resolved or questions answered."

“It is common for individuals to be out of eligibility for months, jeopardizing their services. Cases being processed are extremely back logged. When you speak with a customer service rep they are not knowledgeable. Hold times on the phone can be very lengthy.”

“Application and documentation has been lost after we have sent it, we resend and again they have lost it and closed the case.”

“We had a person lose eligibility last year, it took many hours of staff time and we were owed more than \$20,000. We finally got things fixed.”

There have been several times that I have received conflicting information. For example, I have faxed in re-certification paperwork and have been told I needed to call to verify that it had been received. However, when I have called to verify, I was told I didn’t need to call.”

“When asking for letters for correction for mistakes made by the Clearinghouse to explain to clients families, no letters were sent in detail to explain the mistakes made by the Clearinghouse for the failure to catch differences in amounts of income, causing client obligations to increase a sizeable amount.”

“As a social worker and someone that knows how to manage the Medicaid processes, I struggle sometimes getting through and understanding how out of the blue people are missing from Medicaid or the Clearinghouse system. The difficulty in trying to navigate a review or new application is challenging at best. I can’t imagine being an elderly person, a person with a disability, or a new parent of a child with a disability trying to navigate these systems without significant assistance. We are often met with resistance when trying to help a family navigate, even when we have Medical Rep status.”

“They simply are not able to do the job. They do not take ownership for their mistakes. They do not know the “person served” and thus there is never a sense of urgency. It is very confusing to families and they do not take the time to explain and/or they refuse to talk to them.”

It is clear that serious concerns surround the current eligibility determination process. We appreciate this committee’s willingness to consider these challenges, and urge the legislature to take action to improve the eligibility determination system in support of Kansans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.