



AbilityPoint

Serving Individuals with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities

TO: Senator Beverly Gossage, Chair and members of the 2023 Special Committee on Intellectual and Developmental Disability Waiver

FR: Kevin Fish, AbilityPoint Executive Director

RE: Funding On-going Needs for IDD Service Providers

Senator Gossage and members of the committee thank you for the opportunity to share about the ongoing need to make Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD) funding an annual budgetary priority.

My name is Kevin Fish and I serve as the Executive Director of AbilityPoint, formerly known as The Arc of Sedgwick County. AbilityPoint is celebrating 70 years this fall serving individuals living with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families in South Central Kansas.

First, I want to say thank you for the overwhelming level of support over the last several sessions to address some of the IDD funding shortfalls. Most notably for our organization, the Targeted Case Management (TCM) increase that went into effect July 1 of this year. We have already been able to adjust wages for our entire TCM team with plans for additional increases once the department budget moves into the black.

AbilityPoint is one of the largest TCM providers in the State serving 700+ individuals and their families. We do not provide typical day or residential HCBS funded services, making us an external TCM provider. Targeted Case Management is not an HCBS service, so funding adjustments have to be made separately for this crucial service. This distinction has not always been clear, so TCM providers went 15+ years without any increases creating a funding crisis that magnified during the pandemic and the following inflation surge. I want to first stress this point, so that as plans for rate studies ensue to ensure the needed adjustments are made that targeted case management is included in the plan.

Targeted case management is not only funded differently than Home and Community Based Services (HSBS), but also billed differently. A number of tasks are required to provide support, guidance and resources through case management, but not all of those tasks are billable activities. Transportation and travel time are examples. Attending team meetings at area agencies, visiting clients in their homes or where they work and monitoring their services requires travel throughout the county which is not billable time. Creating and managing files for clients is a necessity but is not a billable activity. Continuous training on requirements, changes in processes, resources, customer service and file review are needed, but not billable activities. For most case managers only about 65% of their time is billable and what is received for their work is meant to cover all the costs of doing business.

For clients and families in need of an interpreter, it is a resource needed to provide the service effectively, but at a cost to the TCM provider. Transportation costs through mileage reimbursement or use of a company vehicle for meetings, agency tours and visits are all costs required to do the service. Growing insurance costs, benefit costs and office and utilities costs climb and are expenses for ongoing operations. Beyond the case managers themselves several staff are required to help make the department function. The TCM director and the TCM supervisor help to train and support staff as well as overseeing behavior management committee responsibilities and working with new families and assigning caseloads. They are pivotal positions, but not billable roles. From the finance department, administration, receptionist, janitorial, and operations there are several key positions that should be covered in part, through the billing of TCM services.

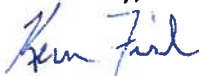
Like a number of agencies, AbilityPoint would lose hundreds of thousands of dollars annually on this mandated state funded service. With the rate increase established this year, we are optimistic that it will make a significant change and allow us not only to better compensate staff, but cover our actual costs, and allow our fundraising efforts to focus on expanding opportunities vs keeping the lights on.

As we look to establishing a rate study that takes all IDD services into account, we also hope that it takes all costs into account as well and recognizes that breakeven is not good business. Organizations, even not for profits, must be able to generate enough income to grow, to provide staff increases, expand benefits, and ensure the resources needed are available.

For years advocates have shared the need to 'build capacity' to meet the growing needs of Kansans living with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The resources are needed to support those in services today, but also to serve those waiting for services and those who have not yet applied. Statistically there are 5,238 individuals with IDD living in Sedgwick County. Only about 50% have applied for services and been deemed eligible and nearly 1,000 of those are on the current HCBS waiting list. Regular budget increases for TCM and HCBS services must be planned and implemented to meet the inflationary costs of business and strengthen our IDD service system for the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our appreciation and to urge the implementation of a plan to ensure funding adjustments can and will be made. If there is any additional information or assistance I or my team can make we are more than willing to provide it.

Sincerely,



Kevin Fish
Executive Director