



8823 4th Street, P.O. Box 838, Westport Addition, Great Bend, KS 67530
(620) 792-1321 Fax (620) 792-4709

February 10, 2020

TO: Will Carpenter, Chair & Members of the House Social Services Budget Committee
FR: Vick M. Keffer, Sunflower Diversified Services, Inc. Director of Human Resources
RE: Intellectual & Development Disabilities (IDD) Workforce Challenges

Chairman Carpenter and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to share the challenges that our organization faces in regards to quality services for Kansans with IDD in our communities.

Direct Support Professional Employment Challenges:

Sunflower Diversified Services, Inc. has many challenges finding and keeping quality employees that are interested in providing direct support to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. From a Human Resources view we work very hard to find new employees:

1. that have a heart for service
2. have a desire to work with people that have different abilities
3. must pass the background checks
4. must pass a drug screen
5. settle in to being long term employees

Our organization pushes hard against the revolving door of employment trying to keep the employees that are successful. This is very difficult when we are up against fast food restaurants that offer \$12.00 or more an hour with little to no responsibility. We need our employees to value, the same way we do, the fact that we are here to serve the IDD community in our area.

We are expecting our employees:

1. to be ready & able to perform CPR (we'll train them on paid time)
2. offer first aid (we'll training them on paid time)
3. To support all activities of daily living
4. To provide full assistance to the people we support in wheelchairs (feeding, bathing, bathroom responsibilities)
5. serve as a role model
6. Learn the MANDT relationship system (2 full days of paid time training)
7. lead by example
8. all while coaching and supporting the choices that the people we serve make

This is easier said than done. Our employees have so much more responsibility in their jobs as a Direct Support Professional than the employee that is working at Arby's. I drove through Arby's 2 nights ago to pick up supper and I was greeted by a gal that picks up part-time hours with us. I almost cried when I



8823 4th Street, P.O. Box 838, Westport Addition, Great Bend, KS 67530
(620) 792-1321 Fax (620) 792-4709

saw her. She earns \$2.00 more per hour working the drive-up window at Arby's. Thankfully she still picks up hours for us, but only if she doesn't have shifts available at Arby's. She is great with the people we serve, you can see it in their eyes how they enjoy being around her, but the bottom line for her is she needs to pay her bills and \$2.00 per hour makes a big difference.

Challenging Employees to Make Their Career in the IDD Field:

When I ask applicants at Sunflower Diversified Services, Inc. if they are looking for a career rather than a job I am often greeted with blank stares. The applicants are often just looking for a short-term job for our long-term need of dedicated, responsible employees. We invest money running backgrounds, doing drug screens, providing 3 weeks of on-site paid trainings before we are confident that they can be left alone to support one of the people we serve. We put so much effort into getting them trained and then poof, they are gone. The employees have moved on to jobs that have less responsibility and more pay. We have seen at our organization that if we can get their heart involved in their job they are more likely to make it past a year of employment. It's hard to see the people we serve ask about the staff that supported them and bonded with them 2 weeks ago to know that they are gone. They don't work here anymore, they have left. They left for greener pastures. They left for easier hours. They left for a job with a distinct career path. They left for less responsibility. They left because they know that by themselves they can't make a big enough difference. We need staff that see the small impacts they can make on a daily basis. We need our employees to be able to support their families on the wage they earn. We need to have valuable and affordable benefits. We need to have a specific career path for our Direct Support Professionals. We need them to choose this life. We need to permanently touch their hearts. Through all these needs we need assistance of the State to help make direct support professionals (DSP) a viable career path with a way to grow our employment base. Since January of 2018 Sunflower Diversified Services has had 183 employees leave our organization. Our current employee count is 137. In the past 2 years we've had more employees leave than we have had stay. This turnover is a huge expense to our organization.

Example:

\$150.00 Background checks (HR support to run the backgrounds)
Monthly insurance costs - single \$362.18 per month X 3 months = \$1,086
Initial orientation training 5 hours – (and the cost of trainer)
Benefits enrollment 2 hours (HR support to process all the benefits)
Mandt Training 16 hours (and the cost of trainer)
ANE 8 hours (and the cost of trainer)
CPR and First Aid 5 hours (and the cost of trainer)
Daily documentation training (meals, BMs, Urine, behaviors, Meds) 4 hours (and the cost of trainer)
Med training 3 hours (and the cost of trainer)
Res training 80 hours (2 weeks before they are done shadowing)



8823 4th Street, P.O. Box 838, Westport Addition, Great Bend, KS 67530
(620) 792-1321 Fax (620) 792-4709

Client history and how to manage each client's unique behaviors 4 hours (and the cost of trainer)
Person Centered Plan training 3 hours (and the cost of trainer)
Recycling equipment training 4 hours (and the cost of trainer)
Driver Training 16 hours shadowing a driver (and the cost of trainer)

Total hours: 292 at a minimum

Conclusion:

It's easy to see the cost is substantial. The training is intensive. The monetary reward is falling short. But the ability to impact someone's life on a daily basis is amazing and worth the investment. We need support from the State and this committee to fine tune resources, expand professional educational opportunities that help future employees see the value and future growth supporting the citizens of Kansas with Intellectual and development disabilities.