SEKRS: A good idea since 1990

Southeast Kansas Respite Services, Inc. (SEKRS) has provided families in southeast Kansas with respite or a break in the care of their family member of any age with any disability or health condition for more than 25 years. In collaboration with area developmental disability agencies and mental health centers, the KU program at Parsons answered a need voiced by families for their loved ones that require around the clock care. The Respite goal began as and continues to give families and individuals who provide the daily care, peace of mind because the respite provider in their home has been screened, trained, and has experience providing care. The program was immediately successful as an effective and cost efficient means of helping area families support their loved ones at home. Dr. David Lindeman, Director, LSI/Parsons, said, “The programs provided by the University of Kansas in collaboration with SEKRS and our community partners are a valuable resource to southeast Kansas and provide vital supports to children, families, and individuals with disabilities.”

In FY 2016, in-home services were provided to 140 families by 132 care providers for a total of 35,797 hours. Families are surveyed yearly for their evaluation of services and the responses continue to be positive and enthusiastically “thumbs up!” “I just want to say that this service has been a tremendous blessing to our family. The care providers are wonderful. My daughter likes them and is always pleased to know one of them is coming.” “No one can imagine just how much we care when someone, somewhere offers a helping hand.”

As one might imagine, a program with a successful history of service finds other ways to serve their customers. In 2011, SEKRS was named Business of the Year by Tri-Valley Developmental Services at their Annual Awards Ceremony. Each year, a southeast Kansas business is chosen to receive this coveted award. Diane Salyers, SEKRS project manager, (left)

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SEKRS, continued from page 1.

Salyers says that the key to the 2011 award was the Representative Payee Program that is managed by SEKRS and provides payee services for individuals who cannot manage their finances. The Program receives the payee’s Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payment and uses those funds to pay for current and foreseeable needs of the beneficiary (e.g. rent, transportation, clothing, food, recreation, etc.). Additionally, the program works to inform and support the person in learning to manage their funds with the goal of the person participating in or making informed decisions regarding the use and management of their money. Salyers continues, “The Representative Payee Program began in 2005, and by 2006 we had 38 customers. Currently (2016), the program serves more than 165 customers, handling more than $1,750,500. Laura Doyle-Colvin has been the driving force in the success of the program and Beverly Schaich, who came on board in 2014, continue the program’s excellent reputation for exemplary customer service.”

Families sometimes need more supports and SEKRS has broadened its commitment to include Personal Care Services, previously known as Supportive Home Care Services, which includes services that provide direct assistance to waiver recipients in daily living and personal adjustment, attendant care, assistance with medications that are ordinarily self-administered and accessing medical care, supervision, reporting changes in the recipients condition and needs, extension of therapy services, ambulation and exercise, household services essential to health care at home or performed in conjunction with assistance in daily living (e.g., shopping, meal preparation, cleanup after meals, bathing, using appliances, dressing, feeding, bed-making, laundry, and cleaning the bathroom and kitchen), and household maintenance related to the recipient. The Personal Care Services worker can accomplish any of the tasks listed to provide essential supervision or support for community activities.

The final program that comprises the SEKRS cadre of services is CRSS, Coordinated Resource and Support Services (Cooperative Project on Dual Diagnosis of Persons with Disabilities) first funded in 1989. This project is designed to support individuals with a dual diagnosis of intellectual disabilities and mental illness in their community and prevent hospital or institutional admission. Crisis intervention and needed follow-up services, such as respite care or attendant care for the individual and/or family are provided. Patti Blake coordinates CRSS and provides information on available community resources enabling individuals to identify and access necessary resources in their home community.

In FY 2016, CRSS services involved 34 individuals from the 9 counties served. Participating agencies include CLASS, LTD, Columbus; New Beginnings, Independence; Tri-County, Inc., of Osawatomie; Tri-Valley Developmental Services, Chanute; Crawford County Mental Health, Pittsburg; Family Life Center, Columbus; Four-County Mental Health, Independence; Labette Center for Mental Health Services, Parsons; S.E. Kansas Mental Health, Humboldt; Osawatomie State Hospital; Parsons State Hospital and Training Center.

Program referrals and support come from: Area Agency on Aging, CLASS Ltd., Tri-Valley Developmental Services, Four County Mental Health, Labette Center for Mental Health, Crawford County Mental Health, The United Way of Bourbon County, Southwest Missouri United Way, Southeast Kansas United Way, and Independence Community Chest.

SEKRS website: http://sekrespiteservices.org/
HIGHLIGHT:

KU ESB/SSC visits LSI at Parsons

Dr. David Lindeman, Director, Life Span Institute at Parsons, welcomed Pat Kuester, Director, KU Education, Social, & Biobehavioral/Shared Service Center (ESB/SSC), Lawrence and staff to the KU Life Span Institute at Parsons on Friday, April 28, 2017.

Dr. Lindeman presented a brief history of the work that established the Parsons’ site, and highlighted the current grants and activities of Parsons’ faculty and staff. Introductions were made and Pat Kuester, ESB Director, spoke briefly about the services provided by the SSCs and their goals of high customer satisfaction, staff who have a deep understanding of their work, and the expectation of error-free service and quick turn-around. She noted, “The more we know about the work that you do, the more enthusiastic we are about the work that we do.”

Dr. Sara Sack, Director, Assistive Technology for Kansans, outlined the scope of the statewide assistive technology program and invited each person to become an ambassador for AT services. While touring the KUCDD building, Dr. Lindeman explained the work in early childhood professional training that Kansas Inservice Training System (KITS) and other projects provide across the state.

Our guests and Parsons’ staff gathered in the Media studio for a “Meet and Greet” and working luncheon arranged by Tammy Schoenhofer, Accounting Specialist and Laura Hanigan, Business Coordinator. In the afternoon, fulfilling the final item on the agenda, staff met with Schoe hofer regarding billing in the new financial system.

For more information about the Shared Service Centers, visit their website at http://ssc.ku.edu/.

What are Shared Service Centers?

The goal of shared service centers (SSCs) is to reorganize some of the transaction-based activities that occur in the units and departments at KU with a focus on providing increased levels of service through training shared service center staff, providing them the tools to succeed, and emphasizing customer service.
CYnthia Huebner honored for 32 years of service to KU

Cynthia Huebner, retired IT Support Technician with 32 years of service, was recognized along with 77 other retirees at a luncheon at noon on April 26th in the Kansas Union Ballroom on the KU Lawrence campus. Ola Faucher, Director of Human Resources, noted that the number of years of accumulated service given by those honored exceeded 1,000 years. She offered her thanks on behalf of the University of Kansas.

Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little thanked the retirees for their service to the University of Kansas and gave each retiree a KU watch as a memento. Sara Sack, Senior Scientist, Parsons LSI, accompanied Cynthia to the luncheon. Pictured, from left, Cynthia Huebner, Bernadette Gray-Little.

Just the STATS: Southeast Kansas Respite Services, associated with the Life Span Institute at Parsons, provided respite, supportive home care, and homemaker services to 140 families for a total of 35,797.25 hours, as well as, managing the Social Security benefits for 165 customers in FY 2016.

PRESENTATIONS


PRESENTATIONS


GRANT RENEWAL SUBMITTED

Grant Application for Pilot Project to become Permanent Program

Sara Sack, Director, Assistive Technology for Kansans, the statewide assistive technology program operated by the University of Kansas, reports that the Kansas Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution 5-year pilot project has applied for recertification as a permanent program from the Federal Communications Commission. As a certified program, Kansas can participate in the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) and receive reimbursement for its activities from the Telecommunications Relay Service Fund (TRS).

During the five years of the Kansas DBEDP pilot project, 116 income-eligible, deaf-blind Kansans received services. Eighty-two deaf-blind Kansans have completed training on the specialized equipment they received so they can access telecommunications services, Internet access services, and advanced communications, including interexchange services and information services available to all other Kansans. Sheila Simmons, ATK Coordinator, reflects on the statewide impact for customers, “The youngest individual served was a four-year-old who moved from Florida with his family to northeast Kansas who stayed in touch with his grandparents and accessed Internet learning sites, while the oldest was a 100-year-old gentleman who reported he was ‘having the time of his life keeping up with family’ through FaceTime.”

Equipment requests ranged from cellular telephones, tablets, and accessible signalers to computers with magnification and/or screen reading software and Braille notetakers. ATK staff and other contracted staff provided applications in electronic format, large print, Braille, and fillable PDFs; all of these formats were available on the accessible ATK iKAN Connect webpage. Kansas assessors and trainers relied on their own American Sign Language (ASL) skills but also used ASL interpreters and tactile interpreters as well as Spanish and Hindi translators when providing services to consumers and their families. The majority of services were conducted in the consumers’ homes but staff did

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provide some services at their offices. ATK staff began mentoring two deaf-blind consumers who received services from the DBEDP pilot to become peer trainers in specific areas of expertise in the past two years.

ATK staff served Kansans from 43 of the 105 counties over the course of the pilot including seven frontier counties in western Kansas. These results are due to ATK’s collaboration with a variety of agencies and organizations to promote the project to targeted audiences and provide assessment and training services to the deaf-blind population across the state. The primary partners in this effort are the Great Plains Region of the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC), the Telecommunications Access Program, and the subcontracting lead agencies of five regional AT Access Sites.

Any individual who meets the definition of deaf-blindness in the HKNC Act and has an income that does not exceed 400% of the federal poverty level can qualify to receive advanced communications and information services equipment. Interested individuals, family members or service providers may obtain further information by calling their regional AT Access site at 800 KAN-DO-IT (800-526-3648) or email ATK at atkapps@ku.edu.

KDBEDP works for Kansans

Assistive Technology for Kansans staff helped a student who is deaf and blind select the technology she needed to attend college. ATK staff demonstrated a variety of Braille notetakers that would allow her to text, email, access the Internet, manage appointments, take notes, and navigate the community. She selected a BrailleNote Apex Notetaker with built-in options to access Web pages, download email, or retrieve files, which was funded due to her advanced telecommunications needs. She is currently a sophomore at the University of Kansas and involved in the student Senate and student organizations on campus.
PROJECT NEWS
ATK hosts KS TAP annual training in Wichita

Assistive Technology for Kansans (ATK) and the Kansas Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) welcomed 45 participants representing all twelve TAP demonstration centers serving Kansans across the state to the annual training on March 9, 2017 in Wichita. TAP partners include LINK, Hays; Three Rivers Independent Living, Wamego; MidAmerica Alliance for Access, Kansas City, KS; Prairie Independent Living (PILR), Hutchinson and Dodge City; Independence, Inc., Lawrence; and ATK’s five AT access sites located in Oakley, Salina, Topeka, Wichita, Parsons as well as the affiliated site in Garden City.

Stuart Jones, TAP Coordinator, demonstrated new telecommunications equipment available to KS TAP customers including modeling how to set up demonstration telephones and signalers so consumers could actually try an accessible phone for vision, hearing, mobility, or cognitive supports. Stuart noted, “The experience gives consumers a better idea if an accessible telephone is right for them or for someone they know.”

ATK staff and demo partners learned about new devices that meet the needs of people with physical disabilities who need voice control or switches to make a telephone call. Telecommunications is a changing field so TAP provides smartphones to eligible consumers who may use them to text, email, instant message, FaceTime, SKYPE, or even make a call.

Each demonstration center was provided with new equipment to demonstrate to KS TAP recipients that will increase individual choice during the decision-making process.

Sheila Simmons, ATK Coordinator, said, “The annual training gives ATK staff the opportunity to meet with our statewide demonstration partners. We really value having local contacts so people can learn about accessible telephones from people in their community. Our demo partners increase the reach of the TAP project and provide the boots on the ground local support when people need help troubleshooting their equipment.”

Kansas TAP provided services for 917 individuals from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. Kansas residents with existing telephone service and income below $55,000 per year qualify for free equipment if they also have trouble hearing, seeing, speaking, remembering, walking, or holding a telephone. For more information regarding the KS TAP program, please visit our website at http://atk.ku.edu/ks-tap.

Sara Sack, ATK and TAP Director, said, “It’s easy to forget how isolated a person can be when a traditional telephone doesn’t work for them. This type of isolation can negatively effect their health and outlook on life. Through our demonstration partners and the five AT Access Sites, people are able to try out phones that meet their needs and get help learning how to set them up and use them. All of a sudden you’re back in touch with family, friends, and no longer alone.”

For more information about Kansas TAP, visit our website at http://atk.ku.edu/ks-tap

In the picture, Stuart Jones, TAP Coordinator is assisted by an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter during the training day.