

Discrimination reduces employability and related wellbeing among individuals with disabilities:  
How public health education can help

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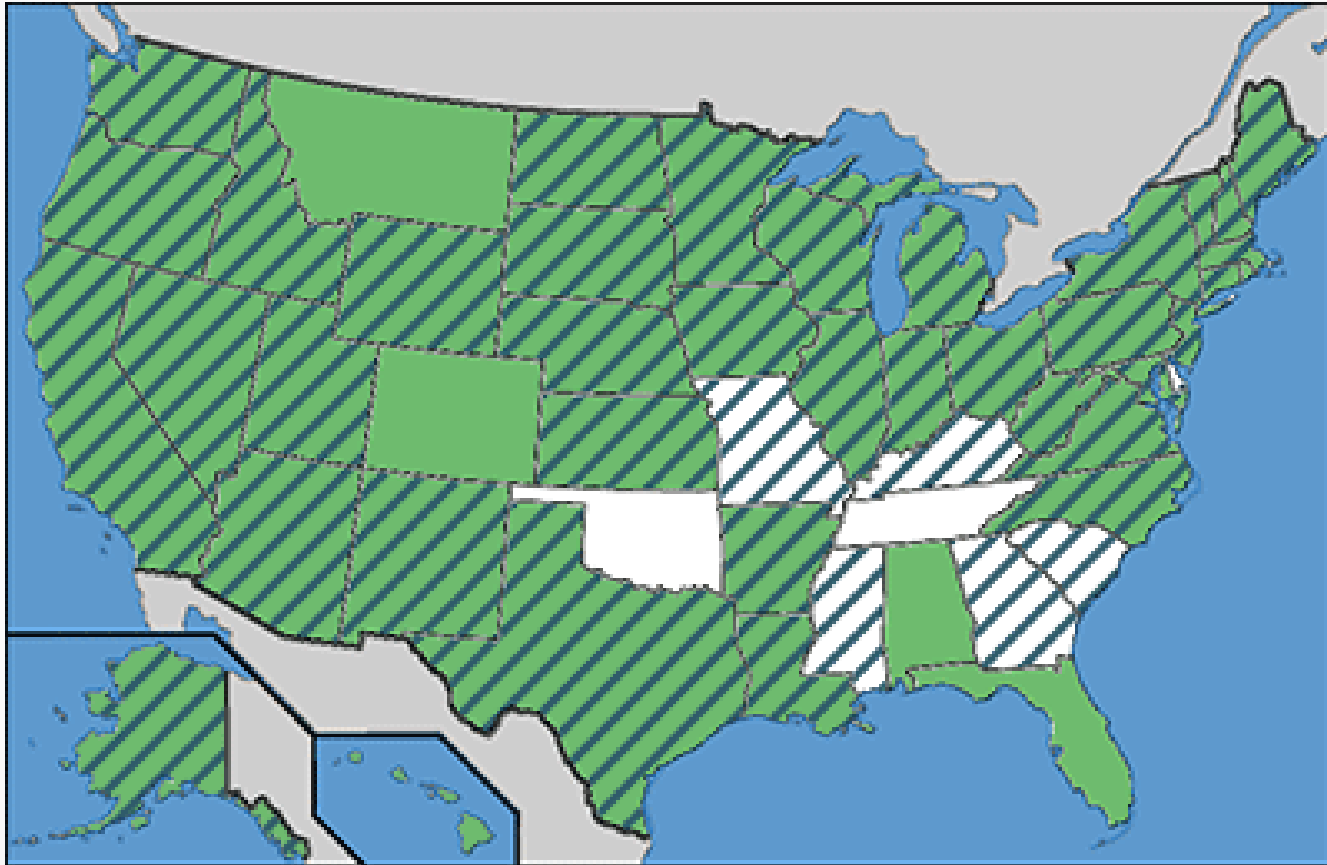
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# Nuts and Bolts

- Disability is the number one health problem facing the nation.<sup>1</sup>
- Defined using Social Security's criteria.<sup>2</sup>
  1. A person cannot do the work that they did before;
  2. They cannot adjust to other work because of their medical condition(s); **and**
  3. Their disability is expected to last for at least one year or to result in death.
- Medicaid Buy-In Programs incentivize people with disabilities to work by allowing them to maintain Medicaid coverage with increased earnings.<sup>3</sup>

# States with Buy-Ins



[www.mig-rats.org](http://www.mig-rats.org)

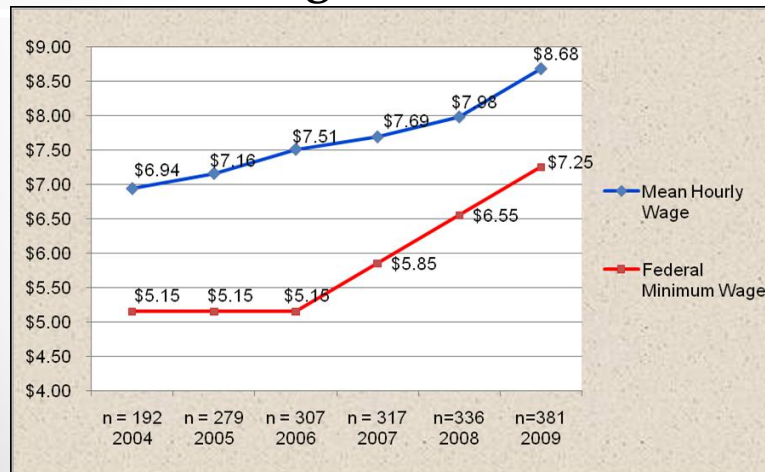
# Working Healthy

- Working Healthy is the Kansas Medicaid Buy-In.<sup>4</sup>
- To qualify a person must:
  - Have a disability determined by Social Security;
  - Be between 16 and 64 years old;
  - Be employed;
  - Meet income guidelines;
  - Not receive Home or Community Based Services;
  - Not be living in a nursing facility; and
  - Have resources that are less than \$15,000.

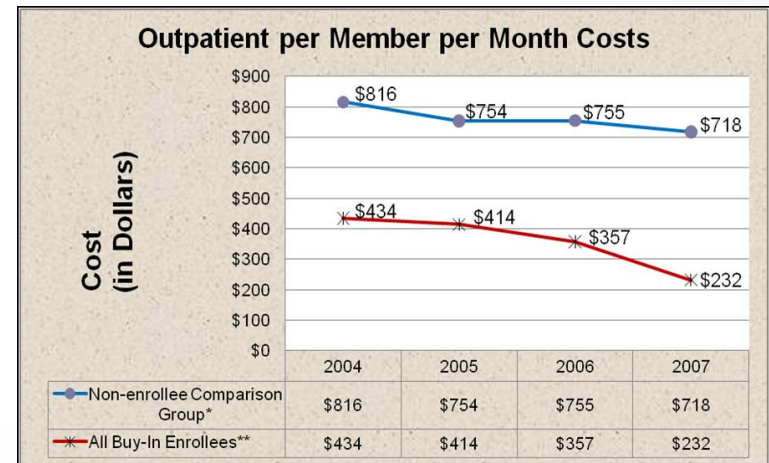
# Why Work Matters

- A misconception is that once someone is identified as disabled they can no longer work.
- Working can improve the quality of life of people with disabilities.

**Enrollees' Self-Reported Hourly Wages 2004-2009<sup>5</sup>**



**Medicaid Expenditure Trends 2004-2007<sup>5</sup>**



# Research Question

- Explore the primary barriers to employment for people eligible for the Kansas Buy-In?
- Barriers enrollees consistently identify are:
  - Physical Health
  - Mental Health
  - **Discrimination**

# Data

- Working Healthy Focus Groups
  - Held at Centers for Independent Living
  - More than 150 participants
- Working Healthy Satisfaction Surveys
  - Mailed to all Working Healthy enrollees
  - 417 surveys returned in 2009
- Demonstration to Maintain Independence & Employment Focus Groups
  - 67 participants from around the state
  - Many owned their own business (e.g., ranch, dairy farm, metal fabrication)

# See the Disability First

- “But when I’m the one that got a disability they felt like I cannot do the work. I can’t walk a long way. That has nothing to do with me sitting down at the table doing all the office work like before...but when I got the stroke, I was the first one, “We’ve got to let her go.”
- “They just make assumptions because you’re using a wheelchair that you’re not capable. --They think you’re physically disabled, they think you’re stupid.”
- “I heard this from an employer that I was talking to - - told me that yeah, workman’s comp said you can hire him but you will lose your comp insurance.”



# Disability is Welfare

- “I got three renters in a house they’re setting on it and they’re perfectly capable of doing work and they ain’t. It’s a mindset.”
- “You are getting a check, living off the government.”
- “We’ve got a lot on disability but you think what the heck’s wrong with them.”
- “People on disability are crooks.”
-

# Drain on the System

- It's ugly to say but I have made so much fun of disability and people that I know that are on disability.
- I've had two fellows tell me with a straight face - - one a pretty good sized farmer, like 25 quarters of ground in north \_\_\_\_ county area and owns businesses - - the only thing wrong with Social Security, if we just lined you guys up and got rid of you we'd probably be doing pretty good in this country. There wasn't much I could say right then. I've actually heard two people say it to my face. And they know I used to make a living and pay taxes. But now I was draining this country dry of their money.

# Caseworker Attitudes

- “They sent me out to the zoo because I wanted to work with animals. They started me out pulling grass out of a muddy empty field because the guy that was the counselor told me that’s all he thought I was capable of doing.”
- “The SRS [social welfare] caseworker does not help me with anything. Anytime I ask her questions she doesn’t know the answer. She acts like it piss her off when I talk to her.”

# Think Beyond the Label

[www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com](http://www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com)



# Think Beyond the Label



YO,  
**JARGON PRONE**

**THINK BEYOND THE LABEL**

I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND A WORD YOU SAID. YOU MUST BE VERY SMART.



DEAR,  
**PRINTER AFFLICTED**

**THINK BEYOND THE LABEL**

MOST PEOPLE CAN REPLACE THE TONER WITHOUT WEARING IT. SOME OF US ARE NOT AS LUCKY.



DEAR  
**PATTERN DEFICIENT**

**THINK BEYOND THE LABEL**

THE FIRST PERSON TO PUT CHOCOLATE AND PEANUT BUTTER TOGETHER WAS ALSO A GENIUS.

# Kansas Employability

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### Welcome

Hiring and retaining qualified employees is the number one staffing issue cited by employers—a concern that will become more pressing as we begin to feel the crunch of a shrinking and aging workforce. To remain competitive, employers are looking beyond the traditional labor sources to access skilled, qualified candidates. This includes focusing their recruitment efforts on alternative sources of available job candidates, including those who are traditionally under-represented.

Many employers genuinely want to hire more people with disabilities, but they rarely encounter them through their normal referrals, recruiters, and Internet-based job postings. They don't have the extra time to figure out where to access qualified candidates with disabilities.

### NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

**US DOL Awards \$21 Million for Disability Employment Initiative** - The US Department of Labor today announced an award of over \$21 million to nine states under the Disability Employment Initiative to improve education, training, and employment outcomes of youth and adults [Additional info...](#)

**Profiles of Accessibility in Action** - People in every walk of life and business pursuit use accessibility solutions every day to reach their goals and lead fulfilled lives. [Read on...](#)

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# Additional Efforts



# Conclusion

- Work improves the lives of people with disabilities.
- People with disabilities want to work, but often cannot find employment due to discrimination.
- A national effort is underway to educate employers about the importance and benefits of hiring people with disabilities.
- Efforts should include community outreach facilitated by public health and performed by people with disabilities.





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