



Office of the Governor
Commission on Disability Concerns

A Brief History of Kansas Employment First

Kansas Commission on Disability Concerns (KCDC)

3.19.2026

Learning Objectives and Outline

Learning objective:

Participants will gain greater awareness of Employment First initiatives and their impact on the lives of people with disabilities and their communities.

Outline:

- Introduction to the Kansas Commission on Disability Concerns
- A brief history of Employment First in Kansas
- Current Kansas Employment data and Kansas Employment First Pilot Project
- Key considerations: The economic impact and policy implications of Employment First

KCDC is a catalyst for change in government for all people with disabilities

We provide policy guidance to the government of Kansas and disability-related information to the people of Kansas.



Competitive Integrated Employment

Full or part-time work at minimum wage or higher, with wages and benefits similar to those without disabilities performing the same work, and full integrated with co-workers without disabilities (Workforce Innovation Opportunities Act).

History and Background

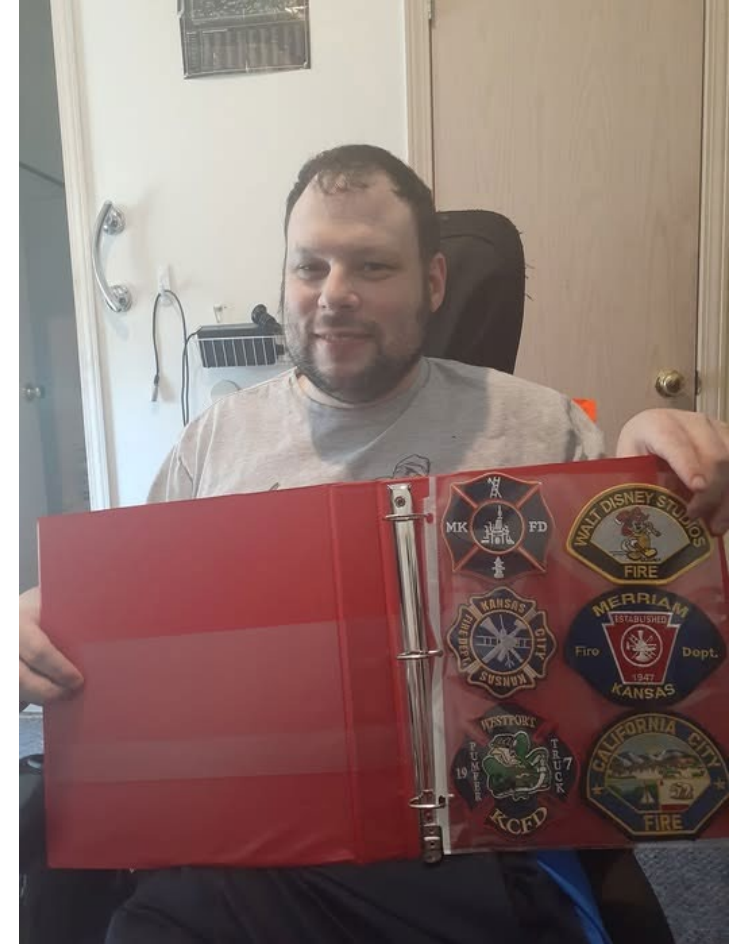
Employment First is a reflection of our values

People with disabilities want to be active and valued members of their communities. Real jobs with real wages is an important part of belonging to your community.



History and Background

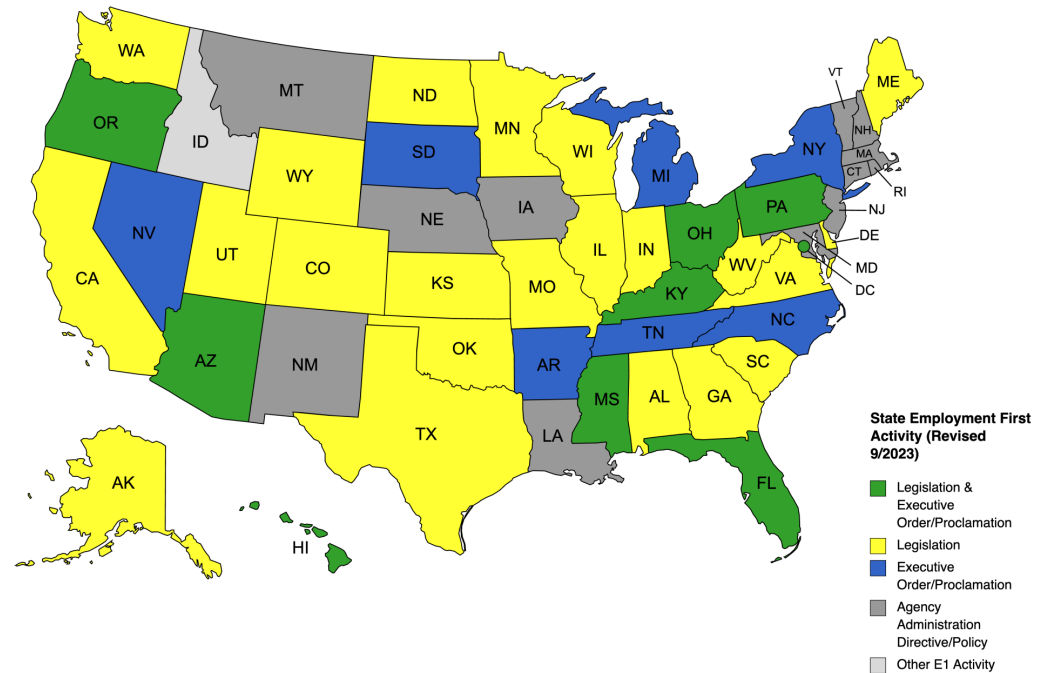
The Employment First movement in Kansas was led by Self Advocates



History and Background

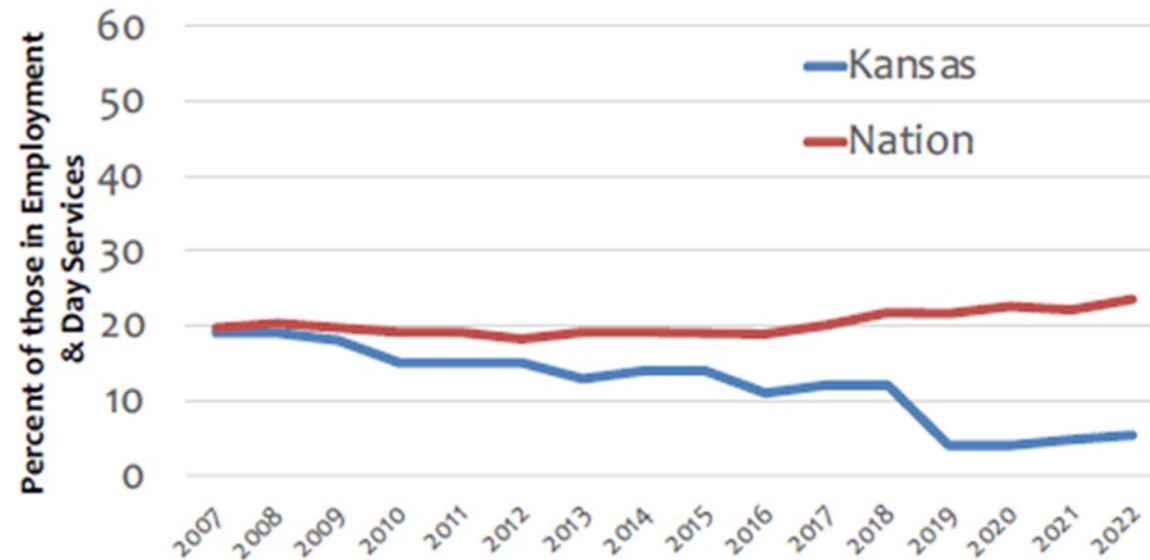
Kansas was the first state in the nation to adopt Employment First legislation in 2011 (K.S.A. 44-1136-38)

- 31 States have passed Employment First Legislation
- 16 States have Executive Orders
- 32 states have State Agency Administrative policies/regulations in place



The Promise of Employment First Isn't a Reality for Most Kansans with Disabilities

Percent in Integrated Employment Services



Source: ICI National Survey of State IDD Agencies

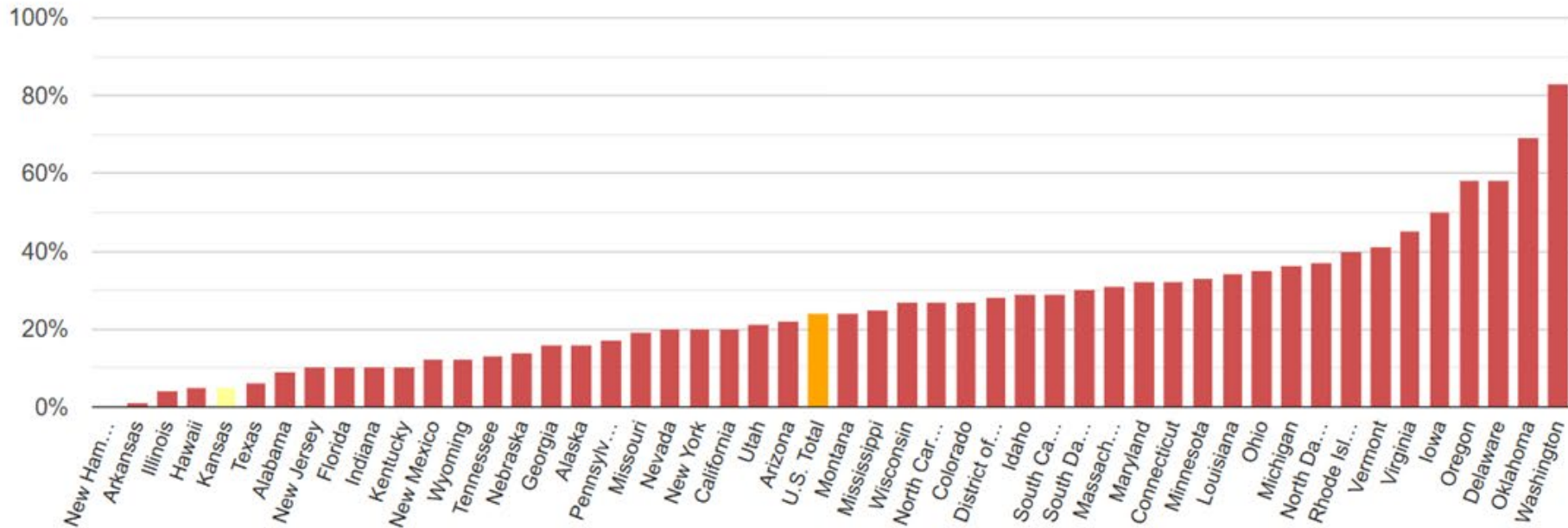


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The Promise of Employment First Isn't a Reality for Most Kansans with Disabilities

Percent Participating in Integrated Employment Services, 2022

■ Kansas: 5% ■ Total U.S.: 24%



Fortunately, We Can Still Make a Change



Capacity Building: Pilot Project Phase 1



Ten Providers applied to participate in the Pilot Project; four providers were selected through a blinded review process to receive ACRE Accredited Training by a stakeholder group selecting deidentified applications



Fortunately, We Can Still Make a Change



Kansas Employment First Training and Technical Assistance Center

Purpose:

- 1. To support the development of a highly trained and networked employment support system across Kansas by providing coordinated and comprehensive training and technical assistance,**
- 2. Develop and pilot a data tracking tool to track CIE outcomes in Kansas**



**Kansas University
Center on Disabilities**

Fortunately, We Can Still Make a Change



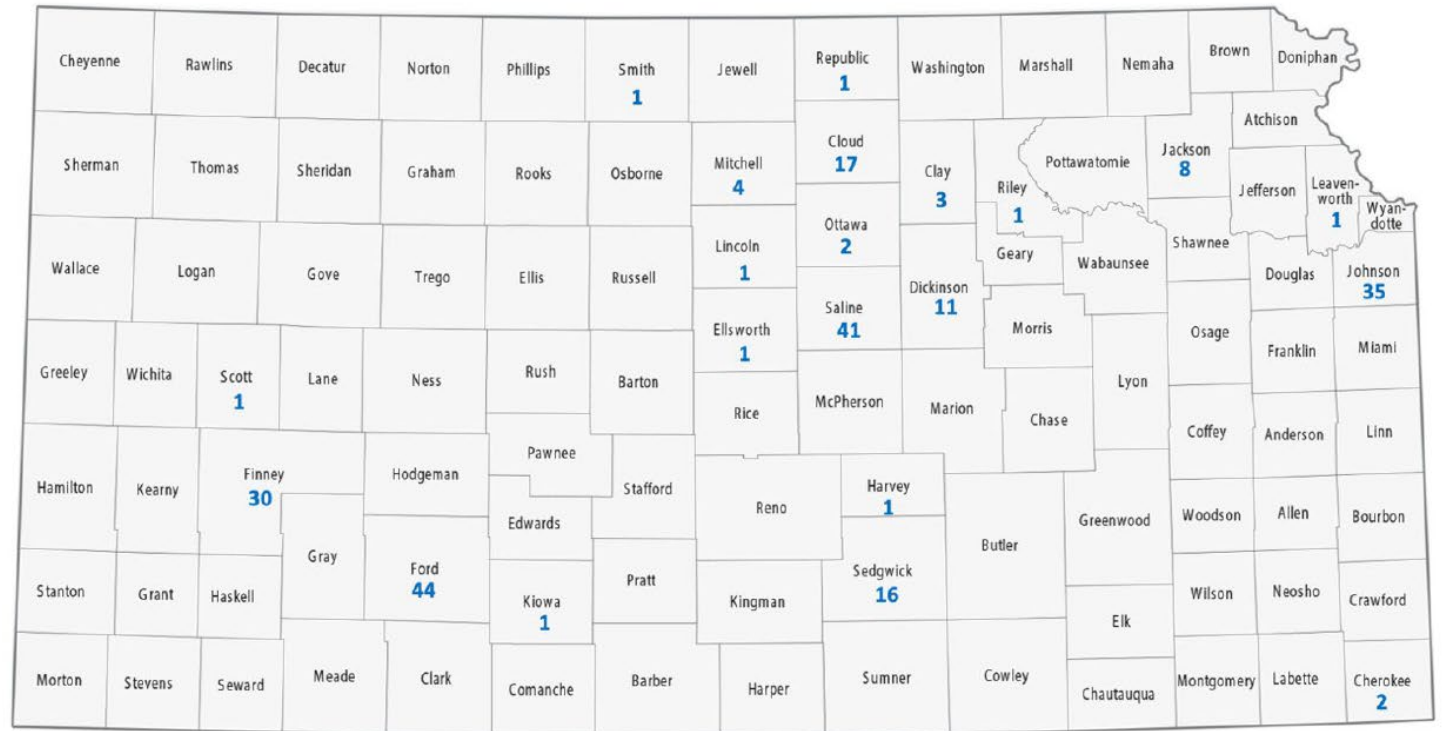
Fortunately, We Can Still Make a Change



Jobs by County

Average Wage/Hour: \$13.78

Average Hours Worked/Week: 21.4



The Nation has Taken Notice



<https://www.youtube.com/live/XXSbOVBPcgs?si=COVpryh7T1jDqMo5&t=5364>

The Nation has Taken Notice

NEON

National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network

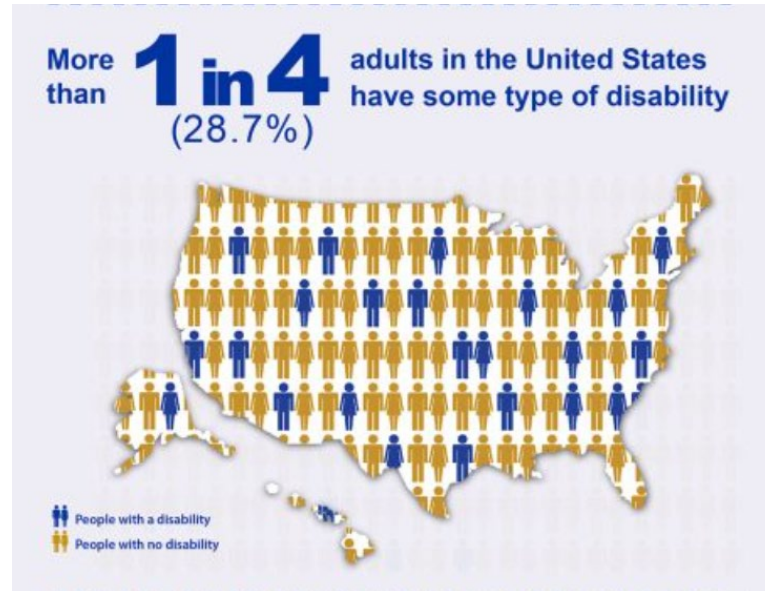
Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

On March 2, 2026, Kansas was informed that it was selected as a “Core State” as part of the US Dept. of Labor NEON initiative

How Employment First Helps Everyone

Hiring People with Disabilities Makes Good Business Sense

The Disability Community is a largely untapped talent pool



How Employment First Helps Everyone

Hiring People with Disabilities Makes Good Business Sense

Improved Productivity and Performance



How Employment First Helps Everyone

Hiring People with Disabilities Makes Good Business Sense

**Companies that hire people with
disabilities can make use of financial
incentives**

How Employment First Helps Everyone

Hiring People with Disabilities Makes Good Business Sense

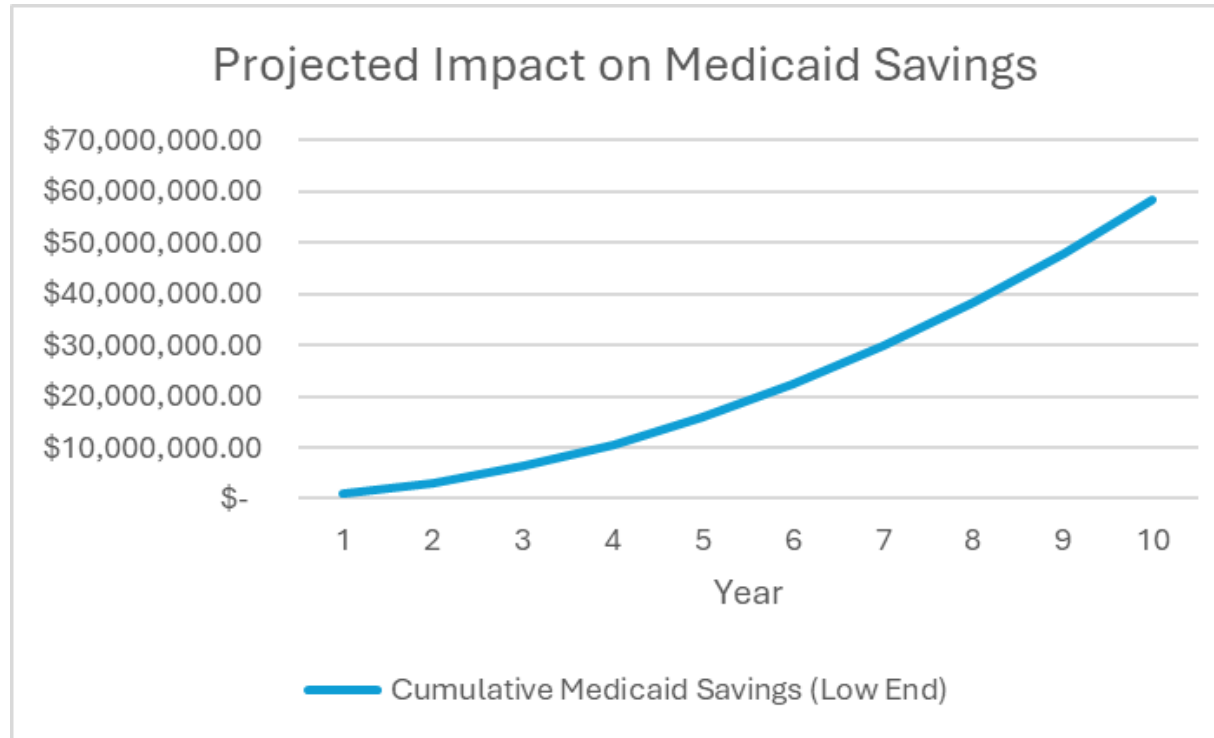
**The Bottom Line:
Companies that hire people with
disabilities are more profitable**

Policy Implications: Lessons Learned from Iowa

- Research by Dr. Robert Cimeria of Kent State University indicates that for every \$1 spent on supported employment, \$1.62 is returned to Iowa's economy.
- The state benefits from reduced costs to Medicaid and other income support programs. In fact, research by the University of Iowa Public Policy Center showed that Medicaid members covered under Medicaid for Employed Persons with Disabilities (MEPD) incur 21.5% less in claims than members with the same definition of disability who receive SSI and do not work.
- This equated to \$20,828,409 in total Medicaid claims savings for the state.



Policy Implications: Projected Savings for Kansas



*Annual Projected Medicaid Savings calculated at \$2,658.17/person annually; Assumes a 2.15% increase in Medicaid costs annually between 2011 and 2026

Policy Implications: Employment Outcomes and Waiting Lists

Employment Outcome Rank	State	Waiting List Size	Relative Waiting List Size Adjusted for Kansas Population
1	WA	10	4
2	OR	10	7
3	OK	1763	1234
4	DE	0	0
5	VA	15472	5157
6	RI	0	0
7	ND	0	0
8	VT	0	0
9	MI	27	8
10	OH	1887	460
47	KS	4828	4828

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Thank you.

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