

PARTNERS

BlueCare Tennessee Managed Long-Term Services and Supports Program

News and tips to support MLTSS partners and enhanced care for our members

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Quality Corner: Employment for Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

According to the 2023 Disability Statistics Compendium, there are 536,506 individuals in Tennessee ages 18-64 with a disability. Of these, only 191,440 or 35.7% are employed. Based on the 2021-2022 National Core Indicators®-Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (NCI-IDD) survey, 47% of those surveyed indicated they'd like to have a paid job in the community. Despite their desire to have paid employment, people with an intellectual/developmental disability (IDD) face many challenges in securing meaningful, paid employment.

These challenges include:

- **Perceived limitations of the person with an IDD.** This is frequently a misconception and has a negative impact on the individual. Our ECF CHOICES program works alongside providers to ensure everyone is trained to be "employment-first," aspirational and person-centered when providing employment services. Providers work with our members to help them identify the skills and abilities they can bring to a job setting. They can also help members identify what type of job they're interested in and provide individualized services and supports along the way.
- **Health status.** Recent studies have shown paid employment can lead to an increase in negative mental health outcomes if the individual is in a low-quality position. Experiencing negative mental health symptoms caused by the wrong work environment is common among any type of employee. Finding the right job matters! Our services are geared toward helping members find the right fit based on their interests, skills, strengths, likes and dislikes.
- **Low employment rates for individuals with an IDD.** Individuals may have difficulties finding work due to a lack of work experience and structured education. Historically, some employment specialists may have been reluctant to adopt best practice guidelines that can provide additional support to employees and employers of individuals with IDD, as well as caregivers and families.
- **Lack of assistive products, technology and resources.** Employers may be hesitant to invest in assistive devices and technology that can help prospective employees with an IDD. Employers may not realize resources are available to help. Providers can work with employers to help educate them on reasonable accommodations and technology supports available to their employees. ECF CHOICES and CHOICES programs both have access to enabling and assistive technology options that can help provide supports in the workplace.
- **Access to employment supports.** Employment services and supports are available to help people with their employment journey. Whether they're unsure about what type of work they want to do, need help applying for jobs, or want supports on their current job - resources are available. ECF CHOICES members have access to a wide range of person-centered employment services designed to meet the person where they are and provide individualized supports.

Our employment providers are required to go through extensive training before providing employment services to our ECF CHOICES members. It's important for job coaches and job developers to believe in a person's right to work, and our providers do a great job of providing quality, individualized services. Currently, we have 14 employment services available to our members including assistance with job selection and support while on the job.

Tennessee became an Employment First state in 2013, meaning "employment in the general workforce should be the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities."



Only 35.7% of Tennesseans with disabilities are employed. While there's more work to be done, this rate has grown from around 30% in 2013.



Employment success in December 2023:

- › More than 600 ECF CHOICES members were employed in December.
- › The average rate of pay was \$10.63 per hour with no one earning less than minimum wage.
- › The highest rate of pay was \$44 per hour.
- › On average, individuals worked 17.52 hours per week.
- › 468 outcome-based employment services were completed in 2023.
- › Members are working in integrated jobs in the community such as grocery stores, state parks, dog groomers, hospitals, clothing stores, schools, and manufacturing plants.

What can we do to help our members overcome these challenges?

Consider these steps:

- **Explore different career paths:** Individuals with an IDD might be interested in different activities but aren't sure how to pursue them. Caregivers and family members can help by providing feedback on strengths, possible limitations and strategies that may help overcome barriers.
- **Provide support in social situations:** Social skills used in the home and community can also be used in the workplace. Direct Support Staff can provide needed social skills training that can help the person interact with coworkers in a positive manner.
- **Provide education:** Inform community employers about resources available that can help support individuals with an IDD.

Members with an IDD who are employed have reported a sense of pride and increased well-being from being in a structured job. While many members may not be interested or choose not to seek employment, we must give our members the opportunity to seek out available employment options. Helping with employment exploration can help build confidence and increase positive experiences for the members we serve.

Additional resources

- <https://disabilitycompendium.org/>
- https://idd.nationalcoreindicators.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/IPS-21-22-Employment_FINAL.pdf
- <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/disabl.pdf>
- <https://centerforstartservices.org/self-advocate-sentinel-supporting-people-idd-workplace>
- <https://www.disabilityevidence.org/questions-evidence/what-current-evidence-promoting-employment-people-intellectual-and-developmental>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7821262/>
- <https://www.tndisability.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/TN%20Disability%20Scorecard.pdf>

Introducing Kramer Davis Health

A new clinic, Kramer Davis Health, recently opened in Hermitage, Tennessee, to provide comprehensive health care services to individuals with IDD who have BlueCare Tennessee coverage. It's now accepting new patients.

Founded by a physician and a dentist, Dr. Matthew Holder and Dr. Henry Hood of Lee Specialty Clinic, Kramer Davis Health offers transdisciplinary care with individuals who have IDD as the center focus. The clinic has an entire floor dedicated to patient care with experts in the following areas:

- Developmental Medicine
- Developmental Dentistry
- Psychiatry
- Behavioral Health
- Physical, Speech and Occupational Therapy
- Speech Pathology
- Crisis Intervention

To learn more, go to kd.health or call **(615) 933-7300**.



Review Our IDD Tool Kit

We know living with or caring for someone with an IDD can be challenging. So, we've developed a [tool kit](#) for our members and their families to make finding information and connecting with community resources easier. It includes information about diagnosis and living with an IDD, links to community organizations, and helpful details about transportation benefits, our care team and more.

Please review the tool kit and let individuals and their families know it's available. We hope you find it useful.

Reportable Event Management Reminder

Our Quality of Care Oversight team completed a quarterly analysis of Reportable Events received in the second and third quarters of 2023. This analysis revealed ER visits without treatment are still being reported in error.

As a reminder, providers should only report ER visits if the patient receives treatment (intravenous, oxygen, breathing treatment [nebulizer], shot, sutures, medication prescribed, blood transfusion, catheter replaced). Please don't submit events without noting treatment in the Event Description section. Also, medical admissions and discharges aren't reportable.

For more information, please refer to the [How Does Reportable Medical Work](#) document.

If you have questions, please send an email to DIDD.ReportableEvents@tn.gov.

Tennessee Reconnect

High turnover in the direct care workforce is a consistent challenge for provider agencies. As a result, it can be tempting to become laser-focused on recruitment to fill recurring vacancies. To address the core issue, however, it's equally important to concentrate on retention efforts to maintain new hires and valuable long-term staff.

Offering education and career development opportunities plays a significant role in retaining staff, particularly for younger generations. However, many agencies are unable to offer tuition reimbursement or continuing education opportunities. Tennessee Reconnect offers a unique solution for these agencies. It's a grant for adults in Tennessee to earn an associate degree, technical certificate or technical diploma at no cost to them. There's no income restriction for the program, and eligible institutions include all Tennessee Community Colleges, Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology, and some public or private colleges and universities.

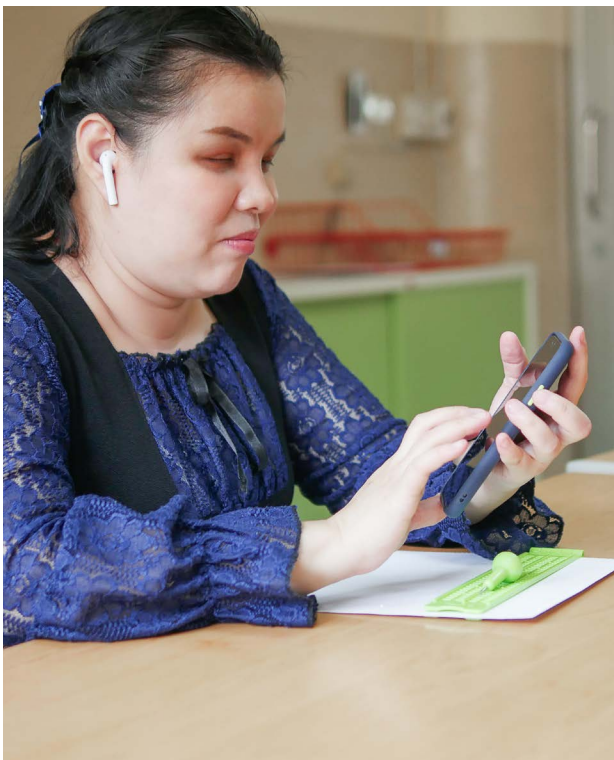
We're encouraging our network providers to use Tennessee Reconnect. We recognize you're very busy – the good news is, there's no additional administrative burden when using Tennessee Reconnect. You can support education attainment and career advancement by simply connecting your staff to Reconnect Navigators who support prospective students through the entire process.

We've established valuable relationships with Reconnect Navigators and key contacts at individual community colleges throughout Tennessee to streamline the connections for our providers. By promoting this program, you can foster retention like agencies funding tuition themselves. This investment in staff learning and development will boost employee engagement, morale and loyalty.

Complementing the Tennessee Reconnect program is the new Direct Support Professional (DSP) Career Pathway for the State of Tennessee. This pathway highlights the various career opportunities that exist for individuals with DSP or caregiving experience. The Career Pathway enables staff to identify their career goals and trajectory, while the Tennessee Reconnect grant helps to bring these goals to fruition. We encourage using both resources to boost recruitment and retention at your agency.

If you have questions, please email Christian Ceccotti at Christian_Ceccotti@bcbst.com.

Building Independent Employment with Enabling Technology



Shifting toward becoming a “Technology First” state means promoting technology as part of a member’s natural support as they build and maintain independence in their home, workplace and community. Enabling Technology can be an integral component of natural support for members who have goals that include building greater independence in the workplace.

Used alone or with job coaching, Enabling Technology can help bridge the gap from hands-on job coaching to independence. Additionally, these supports can improve member outcomes related to workplace communication and collaboration, learning and development, productivity, and efficiency, as well as confidence and motivation.

As we've shared, Enabling Technology is always driven by the member's priorities, goals and preferences. If a BlueCare Tennessee member is interested and could benefit from Enabling Technology to support their independence in the workplace, it's important they contact their Care or Support Coordinators to initiate the process.

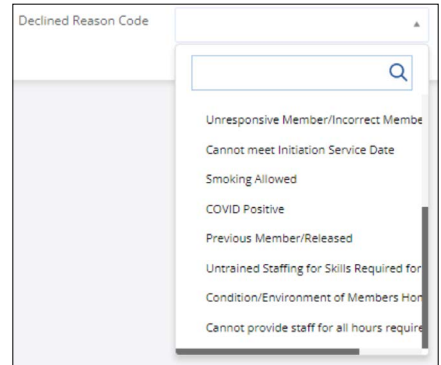
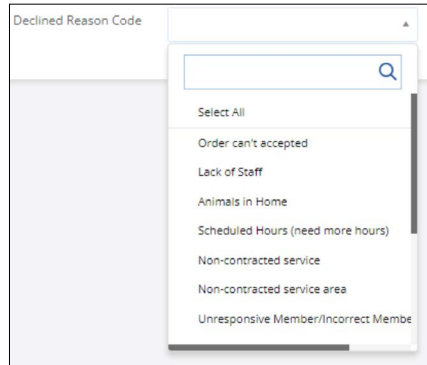
From the first conversation to implementation of Enabling Technology supports, we look forward to working with you in support of our members' goals for independence.

If you have questions, please send an email to Kathryn_Walters@bcbst.com or call **(865) 340-1363**.

Declining Provider Referrals in Order Manager

The referrals process for connecting our members to the providers in our network includes many steps in the Order Manager platform. So, it's important to select the most accurate Declined Reason Code to help us better serve your agency.

The Declined Reason Code helps us determine next steps in the review process. For example, if "Lack of Staff" is selected, our Workforce Development team will reach out to you to provide support with staffing. If "Non-Contracted Service" or "Non-Contracted Service Area" is selected, our Provider Relations team will help you correct this in our system. Please contact your assigned Network Manager in the table below so your agency's geographical service location can be updated.



The goal is to ensure the referrals each provider receives are accurate to the geographic location and lines of service offered. If a provider no longer supports a service or county, it's important for us to update the information to ensure reporting accuracy. By working together, we can support our members and reduce the Initiation of Services challenges across Tennessee.

SERVICE ID	MEMBER COUNTY
T2002	Shelby

STATUS	REASON
Declined	Lack of Staff

Declined	Non-contracted service
Declined	Non-contracted service area

Committed to Service

As your partner in serving our CHOICES and ECF CHOICES members, we're committed to providing you unmatched service and support. Stay current with the most current news and program guidance. Visit us at bluecare.bcbst.com to find resources, updates and the most recent version of the CHOICES newsletter.

How Are We Doing?

As a valued BlueCare Tennessee provider, we welcome your feedback and want to hear from you. If you have questions and/or concerns about a process, or if there's an individual that you'd like to point out for good service, please email us at: CHOICESProviderRelations@bcbst.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Provider Network Manager and Workforce Development Contacts

Manager	Region	Phone	Email
Britney Douglas, Provider Relations Supervisor	Statewide	(615) 427-3782	britney_douglas@bcbst.com
Phyllis White, Director, MLTSS	Middle	(615) 295-9680	phyllis_white@bcbst.com
Recie Gunartt, Provider Network Manager	West	(901) 201-7786	recie_gunartt@bcbst.com
Anitra Rogers, Provider Network Manager	West	(901) 355-3124	anitra_rogers@bcbst.com
Marilyn Turner, Provider Network Manager	West	(901) 573-2607	marilyn_turner@bcbst.com
Tanya Glover, Provider Network Manager	Middle	(615) 393-9117	tanya_glover@bcbst.com
Marea Sweeney, Provider Network Manager	Middle	(615) 946-3101	marea_sweeney@bcbst.com
Mark Watson, Provider Network Manager	Middle	(615) 598-2816	mark_watson@bcbst.com
Marquita Wilson, Provider Network Manager	Middle	(423) 413-5384	marquita_wilson@bcbst.com
Kevin Brooks, Provider Network Manager	East	(423) 290-8768	kevin_brooks@bcbst.com
Rainey Johnson, Provider Network Manager	East	(865) 712-5980	rainey_johnson@bcbst.com
Komeisha Rodgers, Provider Network Manager	East	(423) 305-4543	komeisha_rodgers@bcbst.com
Naveh Eldar, Director of I/DD Programs	Statewide	(615) 524-1517	naveh_eldar@bcbst.com
Christian Ceccotti, Workforce Development Manager	Statewide	(423) 290-9284	christian_ceccotti@bcbst.com
Tonya Starks, Workforce Development Specialist	West	(901) 713-9602	tonya_starks@bcbst.com
Kylie McMullen, Workforce Development Specialist	Middle	(615) 924-3424	kylie_mcmullen@bcbst.com
Patrick Hampton, Workforce Development Specialist	East	(423) 509-3791	patrick_hampton@bcbst.com
Brittney Cook, Claims Liaison	East	(423) 637-0734	brittney_cook@bcbst.com
Corey Vance, Claims Liaison	East	(615) 761-8732	corey_vance@bcbst.com
Nichole Phillips, Employment Services & Supports Specialist	Statewide	(615) 651-9076	nichole_phillips@bcbst.com
Aimee Rogers, Employment Services & Supports Specialist	Statewide	(423) 362-2562	aimee_rogers@bcbst.com
Kathryn Walters, Technology Champion	Statewide	(865) 340-1363	kathryn_walters@bcbst.com
Evy Boyer, Housing and Transition Manager	Statewide	(615) 218-2642	evelyn_boyer@bcbst.com

Where to Turn for Help

Your Service Need	Operational Area	Contact
Eligibility Services, Claims, Inquiries	BlueCare Provider Services/ Eligibility Service Line	1-888-747-8955
General Contracting/ Credentialing Questions	Provider Network Services/ Credentialing	1-800-924-7141, ext. 5775 (Provider Network Services) 1-800-357-0395 (Credentialing)
Member Related Questions/Supports, Member Emergencies (After Hours/Weekends Only) During Regular Hours Contact Coordinator Directly	Support/Care Coordination	1-800-262-2873
Sandata/EVV Tech Support	Sandata Client Relations (EVV)	1-855-389-4843
Availity Claim Submission Tech Support	Availity	1-800-282-4548
CHOICES Web Portal Claims Tech Support	e-Business	(423) 535-5717, select option 2
Provider Education, General Provider Support, Assistance with Contracting/Credentialing	CHOICES/ECF Provider Relations	CHOICESProviderRelations@bcbst.com
Authorizations Support, General Billing – Release of Units	Provider Inquiry Specialist Team	ProviderAuthIssues@bcbst.com OR call 1-888-747-8955, select option 2
Change of Ownership Notifications, Questions/Concerns	Provider Relations	Provider_CHOW@bcbst.com
GPS Tablet Replacement, Tablet Exceptions	Provider Specialist Team	CHOICES_EVV_Device@bcbst.com

You may also log in to Availity to check your claims status, eligibility and benefits.