

October 2, 2024

TO: Special Committee on Targeted Case Management
Representative Will Carpenter, Chair
FROM: Gayle Richardson, mother of Russell (Russ) Richardson
RE: Targeted Case Management in Kansas

Thank you for providing IDD support in the past and for taking the time to listen to our current needs.

I am the parent of Russell Richardson, a severely disabled individual who uses residential and day services in Johnson County, Kansas under guidance from his Targeted Case Manager (TCM) who is also employed at his residential / day service provider. As Russ' mother, I have been deeply involved with decisions about who will care for the complex needs of my son, and I have worked very hard to choose a case manager who is best for Russ and best for our family. I do not want that choice limited in any way.

In 2012 when Russ' case manager left, we had the opportunity to find any new case manager including those employed outside of his service providers. I interviewed several candidates, but the advantages of having someone at Russ' residential service provider were undeniable. This TCM knew Russ, and importantly, he knew and liked her. Russ is non-verbal, and has complex needs, so his care providers need to be around him to read and understand his limited communication. For the last 18 years, His TCM has done just that. She sees Russ at day services and can judge his well-being on a daily basis. She can interface daily with his residential and day services staff and work with them as a team to adjust his environment when needed. His TCM is effective in caring for Russ in ways that an off-site caseworker who would not be a continuous presence in Russ' environment could not be.

TCMs are dedicated to the individuals she serves over and above the agency for whom they work. Several years ago, when it came to light that a senior staff member at a services provider was using her position to make program and service changes without proper review and approval, the TCM provided valuable information to the service provider's board of directors who were responsive to her concerns and respectful of her role as advocate. This experience shows how case managers under the current system still prioritize the needs of individuals such as my son over the provider agencies in which they are employed.

Our choice of Russ' TCM as a caseworker employed at his residential and day service provider proved to be providential in February 2023 during a family crisis. I had a fall and received a traumatic brain injury which now renders me unable to work or see to Russ' intellectual and physical needs as much as I have in the past. At the time of my injury, Russ' routines were interrupted and for a time he exhibited some difficult behaviors. His TCM was on hand to work as a bridge between Russ, the residential and day services staff, and my family who came to help. The TCM's knowledge of Russ' daily life was critical to her work to ultimately bring stability to Russ and to inform family members of his patterns and needs when I could not.

I had a choice of case managers for Russ, and my family continues to have that choice. To prematurely remove Russ from His TCM's oversight as his case manager would break a delicate link in his care. We want the choice to use a case manager from inside the service provider where he receives care because of trust. We trust that his case manager will act in his best interest, and we trust that she knows our son more closely than an off-site case manager would.