

Marla Flentje
543 N. Birkdale Court
Wichita, Kansas 67230
316-250-1344

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TO: The Honorable Will Carpenter, chairman, Special Committee on TCM services

FROM: Marla Flentje

RE: Structure of TCM service in Kansas

I write to you as the mother and legal guardian of a person with I/DD who has received targeted case management services in the Wichita area for more than 25 years. During this period, I have functioned as his primary advocate. What I expect from a case manager is navigating paperwork, coordinating services among agencies and solving problems.

For most of this time, I chose a TCM with the assumption that an independent provider was the wisest option. I assumed a case manager employed by a local service provider would have a “built-in” bias and place the interests of his or her agency above that of my son. That appears also to be the assumption of the federal government and the state of Kansas.

I was wrong. And state and federal regulators are wrong in this assumption as well.

Events of the past two years have persuaded me that **TCM services by my son’s service provider assure stronger advocacy and greater accountability in solving problems.**

Prior to 2022, my son had four case managers, all employed by a large, independent Sedgwick County agency. I make no apologies for having high expectations for TCMs’ performance. I was careful in choosing his case managers, interviewing them in advance to determine compatibility and communicating our expectations. Regretfully, his last three TCMs from this agency did meet my standards. They could not even return phone calls.

In frustration, I decided to turn to Starkey, my son’s residential services and transportation provider. After listening to our interests, Starkey’s TCM Director recommended a meeting with someone on his team. Upon meeting Joseph, I found he was knowledgeable and had immediate ideas for enhancing my son’s safety in his home. (My son uses a walker).

Joseph’s advocacy far exceeded the performance of our previous TCMS. He could resolve service problems because of pre-existing and trusting relationships with Starkey employees!

What I have learned is that **TCMs from an I/DD service provider have internal influence to ensure direct care staff/managers are responsive, honor their agency’s mission, and solve problems based on my son’s interests.** We will never return to an independent agency.

I urge your committee to maximize choices for TCM services for families and persons served. In some cases, I/DD service providers can be the best option for effective TCM services.