

February 15, 2022

Brenda Landwehr, Chair  
House Committee on Health and Human Services

RE: HB 2281 An act establishing and implementing 988 as the suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline in Kansas.

Dear Chairwoman and Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 2281. I have worked in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities in Kansas for over 30 years and currently serve as the Deputy Director at Johnson County Developmental Supports. I have seen the increasingly complex support needs of individuals coming into services through crisis exceptions, and the disconnect that often occurs when people require supports from both the IDD system and mental health. People with IDD tend to experience mental illness at a higher rate than the general population. Our numbers indicate that about 45% of the individuals we support at JCDS have a diagnosis of mental illness. As a system, we are seeing more substance abuse, criminal activity, and interaction with law enforcement.

I provided testimony last year about the Community Behavioral Health Team at JCDS. Initially piloted and now in operation, CBHT is a cross-functional team with Johnson County Mental Health and JCDS to provide positive behavioral supports to individuals with IDD who also experience a co-occurring mental health diagnosis. CBHT staff identify and address the developmental and mental health barriers that interfere with daily living, teach coping skills, and increase social skills to develop healthy relationships. Services may be offered in the community where the individual lives, works, socializes, attends school, or receives day and residential services. This unique relationship allows the services to be billed through JCMH, where clinical supervision is provided, while being operated day-to-day by JCDS.

Woven throughout the CBHT program is the philosophy of positive behavioral supports (PBS) and looking past the behavior to treat the whole person. PBS is an intensive service to teach alternative response strategies, interventions, and replacement behaviors. Part of the role of the CBHT is to provide training to providers affiliated with the Community Developmental Disabilities Organization (CDDO) in Johnson County and families in crisis. Critical training is needed on trauma informed care and reversing consequence-based thinking which leads to power struggles, restricting rights and reinforcing negative behaviors.

I want to provide a quick case study of a 14-year-old girl with Autism, living in the family home and struggling at home and school and exhibiting extremely physically aggressive behavior. CBHT provided training to the family on Autism, PBS, and family therapy. Parents were resistive and quick to punish and take away things. They had a win/lose mentality and even minor disagreements were a battle. With persistence in teaching the parents how to communicate, follow positive behavior support plans, and allow their teenaged daughter to help create schedules and earn privileges, she has returned to regular public school, and there has been no aggressive behavior at home for over 90 days.

To accomplish the work of CBHT, JCDS employs three full time behavioral health specialists who provide case management services under the clinical supervision of JCMH. JCMH dedicates a therapist to CBHT who understands both service systems and can provide individual and family therapy. Support from CBHT is available to any resident of Johnson County who is five years of age or older, determined IDD eligible thru the CDDO and qualifies for treatment through JCMH. The team served 83 individuals in 2021 and we've had to start a waiting list of over 20 individuals. Many times, the individuals who come to CBHT have been kicked out of school, are disrupting the family home, gone through multiple service providers, and/or interacted with law enforcement. For younger individuals in the family home, in home family therapy and supports are a critical need.

CBHT has been very successful in helping individuals to move forward in their lives. The work is very intensive – at times case management and therapy services are needed almost daily. They have helped kids to return to school and to their family home, reduced and even eliminated police involvement, reduced use of restraint and medications to manage people, and helped people experience a meaningful life and maintain positive relationships.

Thank you for allowing me to share the CBHT model as a successful intervention for people with IDD in crisis. Access to behavioral health services and/or funding for IDD providers is critically needed. Please contact me if you would like additional information.

Shelly May, Deputy Director  
Johnson County Developmental Supports