

The College of Direct Support

Overview of the College of Direct Support

The College of Direct Support (CDS), a workforce development tool for direct support professionals (DSPs) and their supervisors, became available to Kansans in January of 2007 through funding from the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. CDS includes 17 courses for direct support professionals and 4 courses for supervisors. Each course has 3-7 lessons.

College of Direct Support	
DSP Courses	
• Safety at Home and in the Community	• Direct Support Professionalism
• Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults and Children	• Teaching People With Developmental Disabilities
• Supporting Healthy Lives	• Introduction to Developmental Disabilities
• Individual Rights and Choice	• Cultural Competence
• Community Inclusion	• Introduction to Medication Support
• Positive Behavior Support	• Documentation
• You've Got a Friend: Supporting Family Connections, Friends, Love, and the Pursuit of Happiness	• Employment Supports: Exploring Individual Preferences and Opportunities for Job Attainment
• Person-centered Planning and Supports	• Personal Cares
• Functional Assessment	
Supervisor Courses	
• Training and Orientation	• Recruitment and Selection
• Fueling High Performance	• Developing an Intervention Plan

CDS focuses on the key skills needed by a DSP. Echoing the skills identified in the Community Support Skill Standards and the National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals Code of Ethics, the College of Direct Support identifies and infuses a core set of values into the training curriculum. These values include: 1) inclusion and community membership, 2) full citizenship and honored rights, 3) independent and productive living, 4) safe and healthy lives, 5) choice and self-determined lives, 6) sustained valued relationships, 7) competent and effective direct support, 8) stable and dependable support, 9) ethical, value-based treatment and, 10) leadership development.

Each CDS course has been developed and reviewed by national experts in the content area and formatted by people skilled in adult learning and technology. Lessons include written material, narration, voice and video clips and interactive activities. Annually, content is updated and new courses added.

DSPs need training. DSPs support some of our most vulnerable citizens. They are expected to master complex skills to effectively do their jobs. They must have the ability to apply knowledge and ethics to everyday work situations. The direct support workforce experiences high turnover. In 2002 and 2003, SRS reported turnover rates for community service providers over 50% annually. Thus, new employees must be trained on a regular basis. Veteran staff need to access a range of topics to hone their expertise and build their professional skills.

CDS provides high quality training, addressing ethics, skills, and knowledge. As an educational tool, CDS provides consistent training across settings, instructors, and time. It is available anytime and any place with inter net access, and thus can accommodate individual schedules making it available to all.

Contract Activities

To enable providers to access the CDS without cost, the University of Kansas entered into a contractual agreement with SRS to provide state administration services. This central administration allows service providers and others use of the CDS without paying the standard administrative fee, \$2,800. The state administrator also assumed responsibilities related to the promotion, training, and technical assistance for implementation of CDS and for related DSP workforce development. Each of the contract objectives was met.

Activity 1- Establish administrative goals with MC Strategies

Within days of the contract finalization, KU worked with MC Strategies to get the website up and running (1.1). Training for the state administrator was completed during the first week in January and providers began accessing CDS the same week.

Activity 2 – Meet with stakeholders

Direction for the project comes from stakeholders. The advisory board comprised of member of Kansans Mobilizing for Direct Support Workforce Change continues to meet quarterly (2.1). The first meeting was held in November 2006 in anticipation of finalization of the contract. Members include a cross section of stakeholders. See Appendices A and B for membership roster and meeting minutes.

Conference calls and workgroup meetings supplemented formal meetings (2.2). Two of the most active workgroups addressed apprenticeship and evaluation. Other stakeholders frequently provided input via telephone.

To facilitate communication among users, personal connections were made by linking individuals with a common interest (2.3). As requested, phone numbers and email addresses were shared. Information from users was shared via e-mail on a regular basis. Face-to-face communication was also encouraged. Four Regional Share Shops gave Administrators/Trainers of the College of Direct Support (CDS) and Potential

Administrators/Trainers of CDS the opportunity to share implementation strategies and learn what others were doing, gather ideas, and develop personal connections. Thirty-four training directors/administrators attended these informal meetings. Participants included both active users and individuals new to the CDS.

Regional Share Shops		
Location		Date
Parsons	Class, LTD	Friday, September 28
Topeka	SRS Learning Center	Wednesday, October 3
Wichita	KETCH	Friday, October 5
Dodge City	Arrowhead West	Wednesday, October 17

Activity 3 - Promote use of CDS

Several stakeholders piloted CDS in 2003 and 2004, advocated for funding, and thus were ready to utilize the curriculum as soon as funding became available. ISS and Starkey had individual administrative contracts with MC Strategies in place prior to the state contract. Email contact was made with service providers immediately after availability was confirmed (3.1). By February 1, 2007 thirty-seven providers were enrolled in CDS.

Phone calls to individual service providers were made during the first and second quarters of the contract. In June, a mailing (brochure, positive experiences, invitation to register) was sent to service providers who were difficult to reach via telephone. A second brochure mailing was conducted in September. Informal communication from users to peers has also been effective in enlisting new providers. Newsletter articles were written for local newsletters, Families Together and Self Management Services. A website link was added to the Families Together website to encourage families to participate.

Five conference presentations included representatives from the advisory board who had used the CDS. July presentations included the InterHab Workforce Conference in Wichita (Kathy Olson and local administrators) the Case Management Conference in Topeka (Monty King and Dan Hermreck). Two presentations at the 2007 InterHab Annual Conference, *Real People, Real Lives* in Wichita on October 11th. “What’s Happening with the Kansas College of Direct Support?” was presented by Kathy Olson and several local administrators. “Building Direct Support Professional Careers” was presented by Kathy Olson and Carolyn Risley Hill. At the Annual Self Advocate Coalition of Kansas Conference on October 20th in Wichita, Kathy Olson and Kelly Smith presented “Use the College of Direct Support to Train Personal Assistants”. Promotional items including pens with contact information, gift baskets, and cups were distributed at conferences.

An initial objective of the contract was to identify barriers to implementation (3.2) and identify solutions to overcome barriers (3.3). Fortunately there have been few barriers to accessing CDS.

Most geographic areas of Kansas have access to high-speed internet connections. Minor interruptions in service due to weather have occurred where service is provided by satellite in northern Kansas, however, this has not prevented use.

Meeting hardware and software requirements were not problematic. CDS runs on PCs (Intel Pentium II 450Mhz processor or equivalent, 128MB RAM) with high-speed internet connection. Agencies have been able to locate computers. Agencies without sufficient computers have secured them as donations or through grants, used computers at local public libraries, or permitted staff to complete the CDS on home computers. No provider has indicated that lack of computers or internet is preventing use, although some want to increase resources to expand access within their organization.

In few instances, the implementation of CDS has been put on hold in light of other agency priorities (i.e., changes in administration, recruitment challenges, or dealing with the aftermath of local floods).

The biggest challenge to implementation has been time for planning to use CDS. Organizations, other than the smallest, generally make training decisions by going through a committee. Time for lesson and policy review, prioritization of lessons, identifying equipment and training locations, developing follow-up procedures and incentive programs, as well as securing buy-in from stakeholders for any major changes takes time. Multi-state providers use training that is approved by parent company, and approval for changes takes time for review. Some organizations (i.e., ResCare) currently have well-developed training programs in specific areas and/or corporate training programs. They are gradually exploring how to introduce CDS into their training.

In speaking with Kansans there has been universal recognition of the high quality of the training resource. No provider contacted has expressed dissatisfaction with the content, quality, or format of CDS. Only three very small providers (serving one or two individuals) declined CDS indicating that they have the in-house expertise to meet the training needs of the individuals they support. They did recognize that it was training that should be helpful and available to others.

When agencies have been ready to consider how to use CDS, resources have been available to assist with the planning process and identify ways to overcome any local barriers. The planning guide, *Successful Foundations*, was developed by the College of Direct Support to address planning challenges. Kathy Olson, state administrator, was a reviewer for this resource and has directed Kansas providers to the document.

Successful Foundations

Successful Foundations assists in planning for and making decisions around using the CDS in effective staff development, performance improvement and training programs for Direct Support Professionals and Frontline Supervisors supporting individuals with disabilities. It explores how the CDS can be used to replace, supplement or compliment current training programs and human resources learner management systems.

http://info.collegeofdirectsupport.com/go/resources/successful_foundations/

Technical assistance in the form of telephone consultation has been provided to facilitate planning. Electronic communication has been sent at least once a month to users (3.4).

State implementation strategies were also shared among users. Many of the greatest challenges were in four areas. Ways Kansans overcame these common challenges were shared in personal communication, e-mail and through share shops facilitated by the state administrator.

Where to Provide Training

Deciding whether to complete CDS lessons during paid time at the provider site or on personal time has been one of the largest planning challenges faced by organizations. When on-site computers and staff have been available for training, on-site has been the preferred option. Advantages include having onsite technical assistance and the ability to monitor learner time on the computer. On-site training is on paid time. Strategies regarding release time, on-site support, and monitoring have been shared. Organizations that have done this have developed hard copies of manuals to help learners navigate through the CDS. in these areas have been shared.

Verifying That Training was Completed

Without face-to-face interaction, it can be difficult to ascertain if training has been completed. This is a particular concern when bonuses or wage increases are linked to completion. There are many ways to check on completion utilizing the internal recording features of CDS that indicate the duration and extent of interaction. Use of portfolio assignments, statements of what has been learned, and personal journals are other approaches that have been used.

Selecting and Sequencing Courses

The local administrator can select one or more lessons for training (from over 100 lessons). Which courses or lessons should be chosen and the sequence for completion is an individual decision. It has been helpful to share ideas related to prioritization of courses.

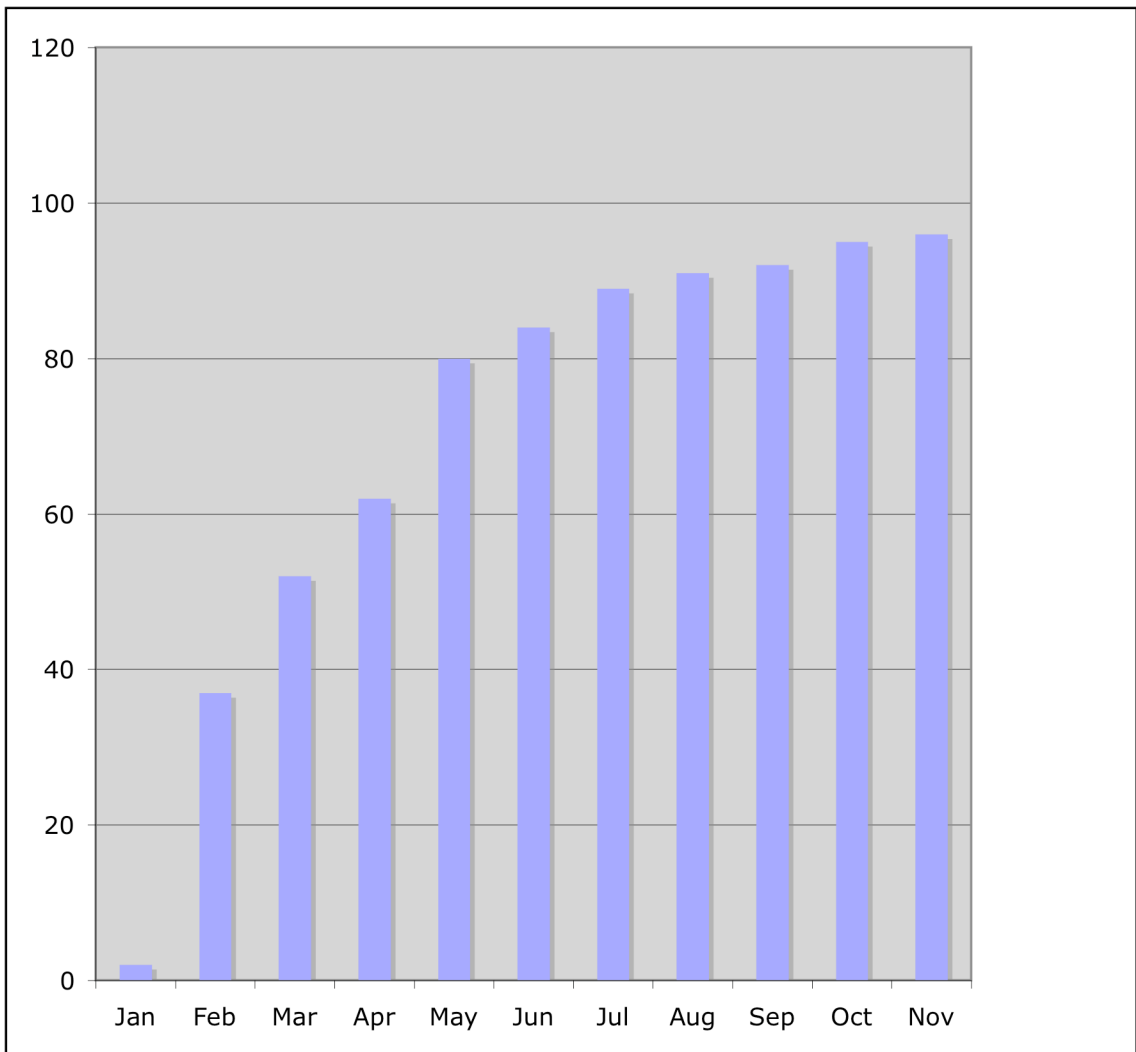
Motivating DSPs to participate – Incentives and Bonuses

Employees completing training off site and off-the-clock or who have CDS training as an option need to be motivated through incentives or promotions. Several types of incentives have been used: gift cards, bonuses, prize drawings, pay raises, and promotions are a few successful strategies.

Strategies to create career ladders and lattices were shared. The CDS provides a standard, validated, curriculum for instruction. Courses can be integrated into various agency career ladders.

The website, www.workforce.lsi.ku.edu, established with information regarding availability and use of CDS (3.5).

*** Enrolled in CDS
as of the First of Each Month - 2007**



The number of providers using CDS grows each month. Ninety-five organizations were enrolled in CDS during 2007. Fifty-five service providers have one or more local administrators. Five have employees managed by the state administrator. Forty organizations are reviewing content. Foster parents, self-advocates, parents, and other professionals are also using CDS.

**Number of Service Providers
Service Providers Enrolled in College of Direct Support
January 1, 2007 – October 31, 2007**

Provider	Local Administrator(s) Trained	Kansas Admin For Provider's Employees	Reviewing Content
1. ACS	X		
2. Anita Motto			X
3. Arrowhead	X		
4. Auspision			X
5. Bethany House Self-Directed Services	X		
6. BLHS		X	X
7. Bridges	X		
8. Brown County	X		
9. Cain's Quality Care			X
10. Care By Design			X
11. Catholic Social Services	X		
12. CCDS (CDDO)	X		
13. CCL	X		
14. Cedar Vale Human Services	X		
15. Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation	X		
16. Choices	X		
17. CLASS	X		
18. CLO	X		
19. COF	X		
20. Community Connections, LLC		X	
21. Connections - Rescare			X
22. Cottonwood	X		
23. Destiny Supports, Inc.			X
24. DSGP	X		
25. DSNWK	X		
26. Doniphan County	X		
27. Eagle Creek Homes			X
28. Envision	X		
29. Flinthills	X		
30. Futures			
31. Golden West	X		
32. Good Will Easter Seals			X
33. Graves, Inc		X	

34. Hartford, Inc			X
35. Heartland, Inc dba L'Arche Heartland	X		
36. Heartstrings	X		
37. Hetlinger			X
38. Home at Last			X
39. Home Base, LLC (trains through Heartstrings)	(X)		
40. House of Hope			X
41. The Homestead			X
42. ISS	X		
43. Jackson County			X
44. JCDS	X		
45. Just-in-time	X		
46. Karis, Inc.			X
47. KETCH	X		
48. Lakemary	X		
49. Lakeside Terrace			X
50. Lawrence Community Innkeepers			X
51. Life Patterns	X		
52. Loving Hearts Training Center, Inc			X
53. MOSAIC – Ellsworth	X		
54. MOSAIC- Liberal	X		
55. National Alliance			X
56. Nemaha	X		
57. New Beginnings	X		
58. New Beginnings of McPherson, Inc			X
59. OCK			X
60. Paradigm			X
61. PSH&TC			X
62. Payroll Plus			X
63. Peters, Colleen & Rodney		X	
64. Quality Residential Care			X
65. Rainbows	X		
66. Residential Alternatives, Inc	X		
67. ResCare Newton			X
68. ResCare-Life Choices Wichita	X		
69. Riverside Resources	X		
70. Rose Palms			X
71. Rosewood			X
72. SEK Respite			X
73. Self- Management Services			X
74. Sensitive Home Care, LLC			X
75. Sheltered Living	X		

76. Southwinds Community Alternatives			X
77. Special Needs Billing	X		
78. Starkey	X		
79. Summit - ResCare	X		
80. Sunflower Diversified	X		
81. Sunflower Home Health			X
82. Sunflower Supports	X		
83. TARC	X		
84. TECH			X
85. TSS	X		
86. Trinity In Home Care	X		
87. Tri-Ko	X		
88. Tri-Valley			X
89. Twin Rivers			X
90. Twin Valley			X
91. We Care Agency, LLC		X	
92. Wyandotte CDDO	X		

Case Management Providers Enrolled

93. Dream Catchers Case Management	X	
94. Lisa Jolliff- Case management		X
95. Southwestern Case Management		X

Other Kansas Users - No local Administrator

Foster Care	9
Parents (Not through local providers)	3
Self – Advocate	2
SRS	2

Activity 4 – Provide training and technical assistance

A major activity over the past year has been to provide training and technical assistance to the local administrators of CDS. Local administration allows the provider to register learners, modify test properties, tailor lesson assignments and individualize schedules, as well as monitor progress, print reports, and assign surveys. The flexibility of the CDS allows agencies to select or exclude lessons when they prefer to use local content. This administrative training requires 1-2 hours. Fifty-five providers have had one or more administrators trained (4.1 and 4.4).

During planning stages the state administrator provides basic training and registers learners. Some small providers prefer to have the state administrator manage learning on

an ongoing basis, as do foster parents, parents and self-advocates (4.2). This service was provided to each individual making a request.

Once a local administrator is trained, they manage the CDS use within their organization. Supplementing training, technical assistance has been provided by the state administrator via telephone for any questions regarding implementation and management (4.3). The state administrator has the expertise to handle most questions and provide refreshers on using the features of CDS. Because Kansas only pays one administrative fee, all direct communication with MC Strategies, the host, must go through the state administrator. Questions related to unique problems with setting up the system, firewalls, pop-up blockers, etc. are answered after consultation with MC strategies.

Advanced features of CDS include adding local content and using the human resource management (i.e., schedule on-site classes, monitoring turnover, printing rosters). Additional training on the use of these features was provided by the state administrator, as requested.

One of the most extensive aspects of providing technical support has been assisting organizations to make the transition to online training. Providers face common challenges with implementation and policy development, approaches and strategies were shared via e-mail and personal contacts. As noted earlier, the College of Direct Support provides planning aids in *Successful Foundations*. During regular communication, the availability of this resource was shared with potential users, as were evaluation briefs, and national partner profiles developed by the College of Direct Support. (Note that Starkey, Inc. is a national partner profile and Individual Support Systems is currently working with CDS to develop a national profile.)

Examples of ways that other providers across the state are using CDS has been shared in email on a regular basis.

Activity 5 – Serve as a liaison between users of the College of Direct Support and MC Strategies to maintain and improve access to the CDS

The state administrator, Kathy Olson, also served as a liaison between users and the College of Direct Support and MC Strategies to maintain and improve access to the CDS. MC Strategies hosts the College of Direct Support. In addition to providing routine technical assistance (5.1) Kathy Olson works with local administrators and stakeholders to identify any challenges, seek solutions, and convey any concerns that Kansans may have regarding the content or format of CDS (5.2). This dialogue continues on a regular basis.

As a member of the National Advisory Board, Kathy attended a board meeting in November of 2006 and a meeting November 12-14 of 2007. Suggestions regarding change or new courses have been discussed at these planning sessions. The Kansas website will soon move to a new platform, that will simplify and expand the features of the website.

Kathy has also served as a reviewer on some resources including *Successful Foundations* and is on the National Board of Editors for the new module in development on dual diagnosis.

Activity 6 - Monitor progress on a regular basis

Planning and implementation of is often an extended process. The state administrator maintains regular contact with providers to assist them with planning and implementation. She maintains some contact monthly (6.1). Monthly reports of use are generated. Use within each agency is monitored.

The College of Direct Support has been designed with the flexibility to meet the training needs of an individual organization. The entire curriculum can be completed by every learner, or an individual lesson can be selected to meet a local training need. Self advocates and parents have enrolled in courses to build their expertise. Kansas organizations have taken various approaches to meet local training needs and to encourage professional development. In the monitoring process, some of the various ways the CDS is being used are gathered and shared with other users.

Pre-orientation Training

Community Living Opportunities has selected three lessons for new hires. Employees complete three lessons prior to orientation, as their initial paperwork is completed. These courses focus on key issues related to safety and abuse.

- Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults and Children: Defining Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation
- Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults and Children: Reporting Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation
- Safety at Home and in the Community: Universal Precautions and Infection Control

Orientation

Individual Support Systems, Inc (ISS) uses CDS for orientation introducing new hires to the concepts of direct support. College of Direct Supports is paired with Orientation Training for new employees once a month. Classroom and computer training is split. Employee has to complete all identified lessons to start working at the home. Throughout the time on the computer a staff trainer is available to assist the staff if they have questions and or problems.

Required Core Training Staff

At KETCH, all new hires are given one year to complete four assigned courses: Direct Support Professionalism (HIPPA excluded as this is taught by staff), Introduction to Developmental Disabilities, Teaching People with Developmental Disabilities, and Community Inclusion. Employees are required to have courses completed prior to their first annual review. Training is done on-site in a computer lab equipped with five computers. Training staff are available to provide assistance

as needed.

Bethany House utilizes CDS to provide core training for staff.

Remedial, Refresher, and Targeted Training

ISS offers courses to employees that may need remedial training or additional training in specific areas.

Flint Hills Training Services, asks staff to complete lessons from the Introduction to Medication Supports prior to face-to-face classes.

Professional Development

To assist DSPs in developing their skills, some organizations make CDS available to DSPs on a voluntary basis.

Arrowhead encourages DSPs to complete 8 CDS courses. Gift certificates and raises accompany completion. Arrowhead is now the largest user of CDS in Kansas.

Bridges offers gift certificates to DSPs who complete CDS lessons. Several DSPs have completed all lessons.

COF encourages DSPs to take classes on paid time. Several have completed a suggested sequence.

Life Choices offers a bonus to staff completing CDS courses.

Career Advancement Within Agency

Lake Mary Center created three levels of direct support positions. Specified CDS courses are a required component at each level. Pay increases accompany each level.

Continuing Education Units

Continuing education units are available through the University of Minnesota for a cost \$10. Some professionals use these CEUs to meet requirements for annual training.

Apprenticeship

The Ad Astra Registered Direct Support Professional Apprenticeship Program identifies two levels of proficiency (Certificate of Initial Proficiency and Certificate of Advanced Proficiency). Learners need to meet several requirements including: classroom experience, mentored on-the-job experience, and a portfolio of work samples. The College of Direct Support lessons are required educational component.

ISS uses this program and offers a raise to individuals who complete the program.

Supervisory Training

Class, LTD asks supervisors to complete the College of Frontline Supervision and Management.

Foster Care

Foster parents are required to complete 20 hours of training annually. Those who support individuals with developmental disabilities have the option of using the College of Direct Support classes to complete this requirement. Foster parents can choose classes that meet their individual needs. Courses on Maltreatment and Choice are popular. The learner can print off a certificate for each lesson completed. Several LakeMary foster care providers take advantage of this option. Foster parents from other areas of the state also utilize this option. The convenience of this option has appealed to some.

Self- Determination

TARC utilizes lessons on individual rights and maltreatment for staff who self-direct.

Activity 7 – Develop/Support certification and career ladders for DSPs

Kansas joins the national effort to define the DSP profession, develop a career ladder or lattice for DSPs, and help individuals identify direct support professionalism as a career choice.

In an earlier grant, Kansans Mobilizing for Direct Support Workforce Change developed the Ad Astra Registered Apprenticeship Program, one of the first apprenticeship programs for DSPs in the nation. Through this grant the program was refined. The CDS lessons required for the Certificate of Advanced Proficiency level of Ad Astra were identified (7.1). See Appendix C. The Ad Astra Workgroup met on January 30th March 29th to plan and develop the Administrative Program Guide

The first cohort of DSPs from Individual Support Systems is completing the Certificate of Advanced Proficiency level of the Apprenticeship program at this time and should conclude their apprenticeship in February, 2008. Ad Astra portfolios were reviewed as submitted (7.2).

Ad Astra brochures (Appendix D) have been distributed to providers throughout the year and information sent via email and website. To further build enthusiasm for apprenticeship and certification, an overview of the Ad Astra Apprenticeship program and the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) Certification was presented at the InterHab conference (7.3). (See Appendix E for an overview.) The CDS curriculum provides the related instruction component for the NADSP Credential and the Ad Astra Apprenticeship.

ISS is active in the Apprentice Program. TARC will begin enrolling staff in the NADSP certification program in 2008. Most agencies link salary increases to completion of the CDS. Some have linked promotion to completion of courses.

Dr. Olson continues to participate in the Labette Community College (LCC) paraprofessional advisory group (7.4). Lori Ford from LCC is exploring how the CDS could be utilized to meet the requirements of the Associates of Applied Science Degree or other courses at LCC. Dr. Olson is also working with others across the nation to address issues related to the development of career ladders.

The Kansas Direct Support Professional website (<http://www.kadsp.lsi.ku.edu>) has been maintained by this project (7.5). The advisory board provides input into this resource.

Activity 8 – Report

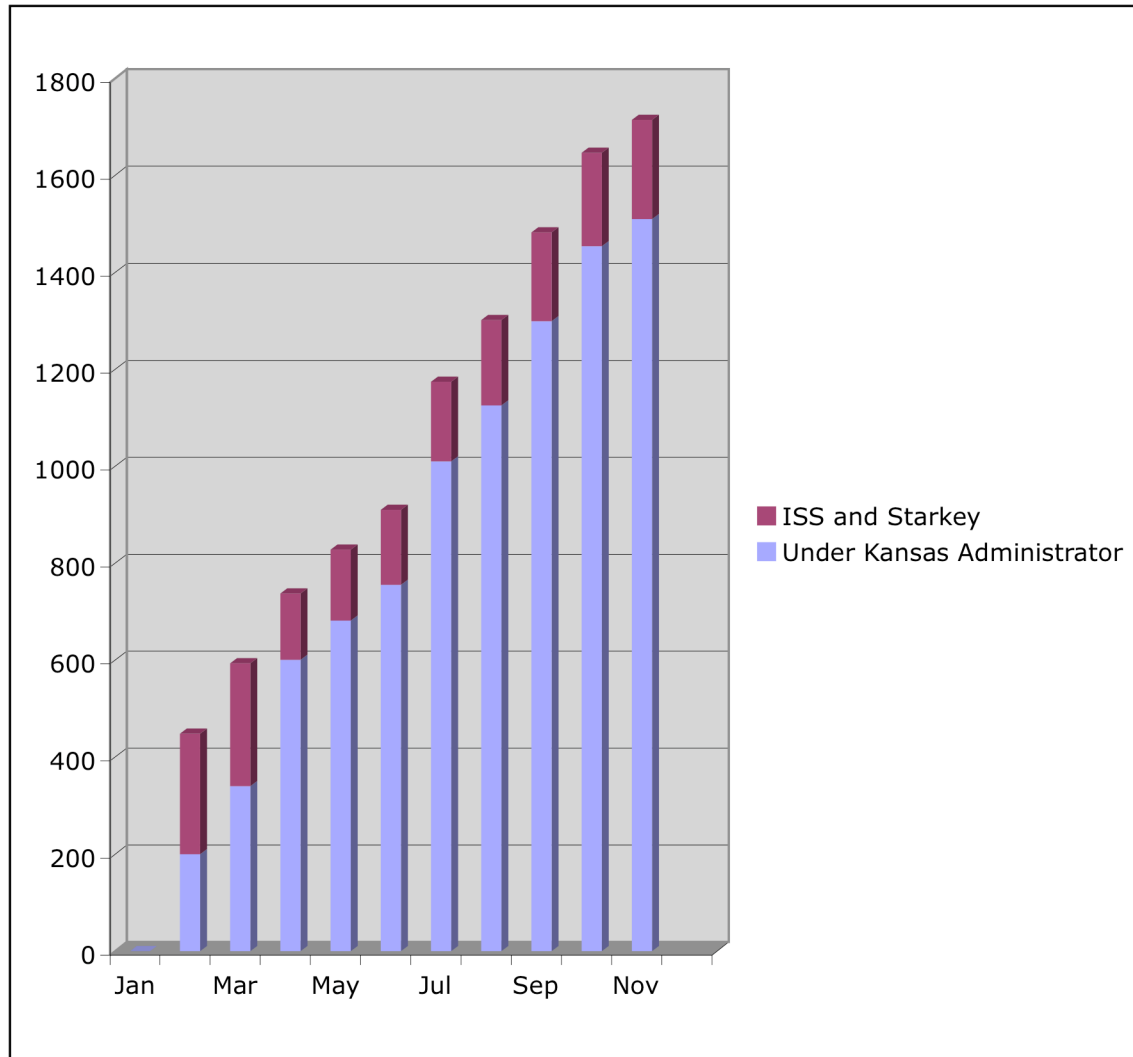
Reports were submitted to SRS monthly (8.1). These reports provided information regarding the number of providers enrolled, the number of learners enrolled, and the number of lessons completed, as well as an overview of project activities. Starkey and Individual Support Systems had established contracts for use prior to state funding. They continue to pay their own administrative fees for the College of Direct Support and do not funnel communication with MC Strategies through the state administrator. Their data is, thus, reported separately. The following graphs reflect use (copies of monthly reports are available upon request).

Number of Learners and Lessons Completed as of the First of Each Month - 2007

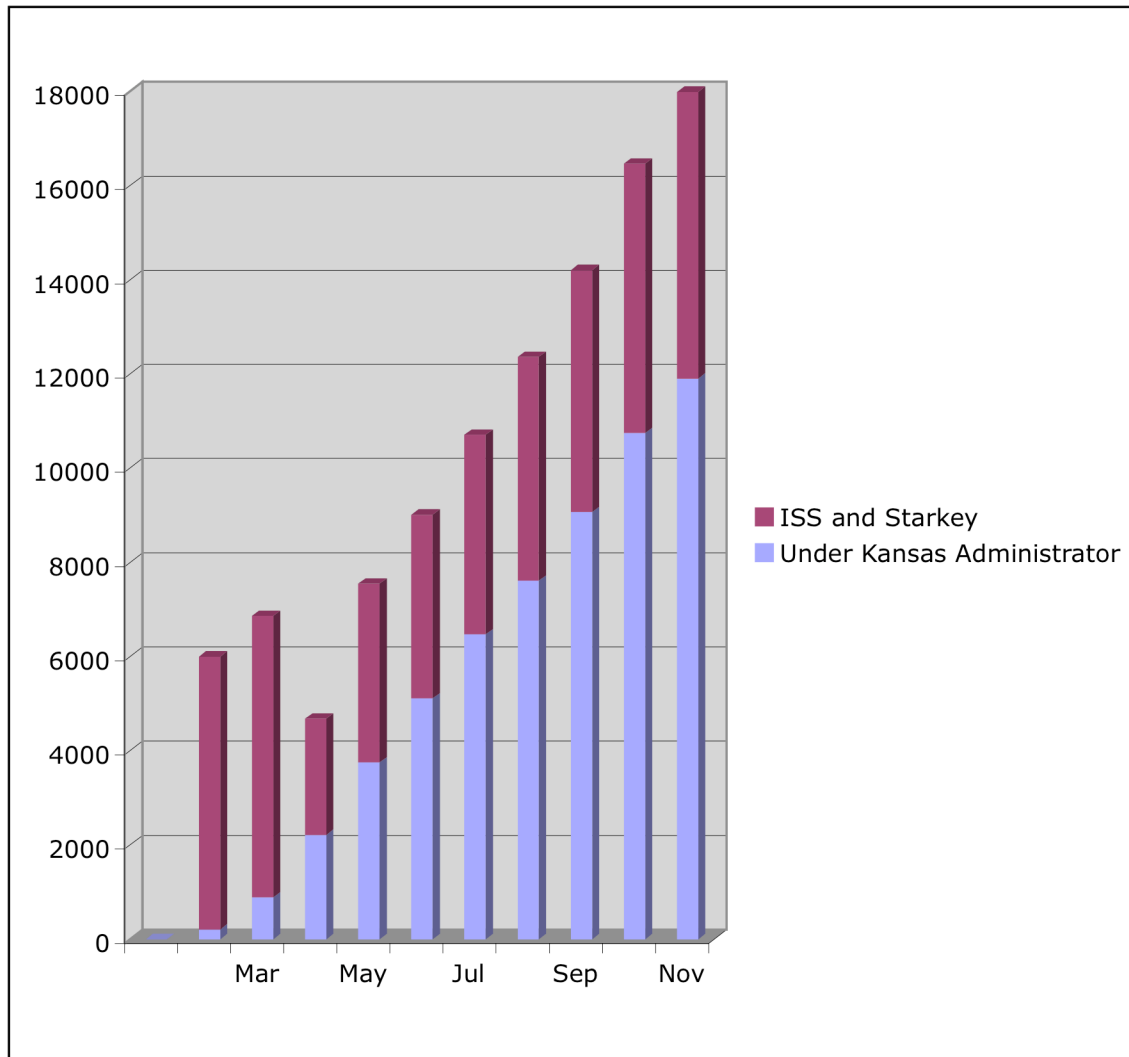
Month	Number of Learners				Number of Lessons Completed			
	Under Kansas Administrator	ISS	Starkey	Total	Under Kansas Administrator	ISS	Starkey	Total
January	0			-	0	-		-
February	200	185	64	449	203	4391	1405	5999
March	340	185	69	594	883	4407	1573	6863
April	601	69*	68	68	2212	2064*	1732	4683
May	682	70	76	828	3753	2101	1800	7549
June	755	72	83	910	5111	2404	1837	9012
July	1010	77	87	1174	6470	2764	1986	10711
August	1125	81	96	1302	7610	3111	2030	12360
September	1299	83	100	1482	9066	3258	2085	14207
October	1454	88	105	1647	10748	3505	2211	16464
November	1510	96	109	1715	11906	3752	2332	17990

- *ISS removed learners from their database. Thus the totals appear to have decreased although use continues to grow steadily.*

Number of Learners Enrolled in CDS on the First of the Month - 2007



Number of Lessons Completed as of the First of the Month - 2007



In addition to the data related to the number of providers, learners, and lessons, comments gathered from users support the value of CDS (8.2). The Kansas Outcome Survey reports that 74.4% of respondents indicate that they are very likely to recommend CDS to someone else who works in the same position. Comments are overwhelmingly positive regarding the CDS courses.

Learners are positive about the format of CDS (Responses on the Kansas Outcome Survey)

What is the best thing about using CDS?

- It is very flexible. I can complete the courses on my own time. It is a thorough program and covers important information that care givers need. We are a small business and provide support in a residential setting. This provides an opportunity for staff to be trained as thoroughly by our agency a large agency trains their staff.
- It was easy and fun and you can take it at your own speed
- The examples and short stories
- It is easy and enjoyable. Also you can learn at your own pace.
- You do it on your own time and are not rushed. I enjoyed it very much, and learned a lot.
- It provided a lot of information and it was a great review that I think that we would all benefit from.
- The ease of being able to work at my own pace and to learn new and exciting things that help me in my current position and possibly prepare me to move on to other positions

Learners Report they have increased their understanding (comments written by learners for local administrators)

- “I now have a better understanding how I can make a difference in our community as a Direct Support Professional. People can make a difference and concepts I have learned will definitely help me to make a difference on how people perceive those with disabilities.
- When I started here...I had no clue on how to work with the Clients assigned to me. This course provided me with tools that I have been able to utilize which brought a calmer atmosphere into our daily work routine. I now better understand how changes in the clients work environment affect their ability to accomplish a task.
- “Its bank of information is amazing. The lessons are easy to follow and the tutorials guide the learner along easily.”
- “It was helpful in breaking down all the terms that are often used but never really understood. It gave different ideas for supporting and teaching persons with disabilities.”

- “College of Direct Support is a course that all staff should complete to help give them a better understanding of how to assist that their clients are living life to the fullest. The best assignment I had was reading the culture chapters. For me it helped me understand that not everyone that lives in America has the same culture or preference I have.
- Over all, it also helped me with assisting the clients I work with in being able to make their own choices and to advocate for themselves. Many people don’t understand that eating steak instead of hamburger is a choice that we make everyday and so should the clients that you work with. “
- “My experience with this course has been an adventure from the start. It was the first time I’d ever used a computer and it was a struggle to get thru the first lessons. I spent more time thinking “What will it do to me next.’ I don’t have a computer so I had to arrange use of a computer through (community college) and juggle my time.
- When I was doing the pretest on the 3rd lesson I wondered what I had gotten into I couldn’t see what it had to do with my job. As I progressed down the list of lessons it all tied in.”
- “In taking the lessons for the college of direct support, I found the information very helpful. There were certain issues that I was not aware of, for instance, doing task analysis, and situations dealing with client health issues. I think this is a very informative course that would be very beneficial to new staff that are not familiar with this field of work.”
- “I have completed the lessons assigned to me through the College of Direct support. I found these lessons to be very enlightening, and very useful towards helping to make me a better coach.”
- I finally got around to starting the College of Direct Support curriculum now that work has slowed down a bit. I am truly enjoying them. At times when you have been in the field for so many years you get a feeling that there is not much more to learn but I find I am learning a lot from these courses and they are challenging me. They are very well done.
- Attached is an email I received showing how a KETCH staff went back into the CDS site to review some "teaching" tips from CDS. I think this story is a good illustration of how - experienced staff come up against challenges which cause them to seek out support and guidance. It was good to hear the staff knew where to go to get some answers and CDS was one of them. The staff is a Job Coach here at KETCH and has completed our "KETCH- first year" CDS courses (four courses). The staff has worked previously in the school system in special education and has taken courses like IDD & CDS thru the schools. This is a good example of the ongoing benefits of the information provided in CDS - especially the "Teaching" Course.

CDS Administrator

I have two Consumers that I've been having problems dealing with attitudes. I got back in to CDS and went to Lessons 2 and 3 on Teaching People with Developmental Disabilities and was able to pick up valuable tools on how to work with these two individuals on the Work Crew. One of the big mistakes that I was making was treating all team members the same way, but viewing these two lessons I found that it was very important that I learn as much about each individual and what makes them tick. I again reviewed their individual records, talked to their Home coordinator and Service Coordinator and my supervisor and now I feel I am better able to understand how to train them better on work site skills. On one Consumer - I talked with both of their Coordinators and we decided that a 45 day review meeting be held with the Consumer which really opened my eyes on what was going on. CDS has been very helpful in helping me work with the clients on the work crew.

- “I have done work with persons with disabilities for a period of eight years. Obviously, there were some lessons which were refreshers for what I'd already learned. However, I found the module on cultural diversity very informative and very thought provoking. I had never fully taken the time to understand how important cultural differences are, nor how much understanding those differences can make a difference in the lives of our clients and how we provide services for them.
- I feel every coach, as well as leaders, could benefit from taking these courses, and I'm thankful for the opportunity to take them and understand how better to serve our clients.”
- Well I am almost finished with all the courses in my listing and wonder if you can drop in some more or all of the rest. I have made it my goal to finish them all.
Kansas Program Director
- Going thru this course strengthened my self-confidence. I found out I was more knowledgeable about many subjects than I thought I was. I also found out what my weaknesses were. I read almost all of the lessons, as I wanted to learn as much as I could. I increased my vocabulary by learning may new words, terms, and looking up the definitions as related to the lessons.”
Learner after completing College of Frontline Supervision

Comments from Service Providers (Small and Large)

- It is a thorough program and covers important information that caregivers need. We are a small business and provide support in a residential setting. This provides an opportunity for staff to be trained thoroughly by our agency as well as a large agency trains their staff.

- Individual Support Systems, Inc. has used CDS successfully since 2003. Nearly all of the 125 direct support professional staff (DSPs) at ISS have taken CDS lessons. It is used for newly hired staff in orientation, to provide regular training on topics related to specific work duties, and for seasoned staff in both a certification and an apprenticeship program.

ISS focuses on the needs of the workforce as well as the needs of the individuals served, believing that when workers feel valued, their performance is high and reflected in the quality of lives of the individuals served. CDS builds direct support professionals. Staff see CDS as a professionally designed program that does not speak down to them. It allows DSPs to get quality professional training. It adapts to the needs of staff by addressing their different learning styles, allows staff to complete lessons at their own pace, and provides flexibility in choosing lessons that match staff work assignments. ISS director, Kathy Stiffler, reports that one reason she especially likes CDS is that lessons bring ethics to the forefront. This is especially important for staff working in community sites without direct supervision.

ISS has seen a substantial reduction in staff turnover with a 2006 rate of 12.8% (down from 41% in 2002). It is difficult to conclusively attribute the entire reduction in turnover to the agency-wide use of CDS, however it should be noted that a major change was the addition of CDS. ISS does not provide wage and benefit packages that are greater than other Topeka service providers. The population served by ISS, is not the easiest to serve, providing services to more people funded by individualized rates than any other service provider in Kansas.

Observations from Human Resource Directors

- I've heard nothing but positive comments from staff members that have completed modules. The modules are informative & interesting. The ability to complete the lessons on their own schedule is a definite plus.

Julie Gusman, Arrowhead West

- Supervision (long term) seemed to be excited about the supervisor modules. I had one supervisor that appeared to be "burned out". Once she started taking the modules, she seemed to get refreshed & enjoyed taking them.

Direct support staff who have completed the CDS become stronger self-advocates to not accept "slackers" as co-workers & report more readily to their supervisors when they see less than standard service delivery & interaction by clients.

Mark Newbold, CLASS LTD

Continuing Challenges

We will continue to support the growth of CDS, expanding use within current providers and recruiting new providers. Families and self-advocates need to be made aware of the availability of CDS. Career ladders and lattices need to be developed.