



**Senate Finance - Workforce Subcommittee
Written Testimony by Karin VanZant
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Chairman Beagle, Vice Chair Williams and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony to the Senate Finance Workforce Subcommittee. CareSource is a nonprofit health plan based in Dayton, Ohio that serves that serves approximately 1.2 million Ohioans who are enrolled in Medicaid, more than 23,000 in Ohio's Medicare-Medicaid dual demonstration project and 48,000 in the healthcare Marketplace. For more than 26 years we have been serving members in a variety of ways, beyond providing healthcare coverage, because we understand there are many contributing factors to maintaining or reaching good health. We have come to understand the needs and challenges facing our members also keep many from reaching their desired potential; we developed the **Life Services** model to offer more than health care to our membership – to offer a network of resources and support to achieve long term success.

As the Ohio Senate considers innovative mentoring or case management models focused on helping more Ohioans come up and out of poverty, we respectfully request that any programs or pilots you authorize include the flexibility necessary to accommodate innovations from both the public and private sectors. CareSource would welcome an opportunity to compete for the opportunity to fully engage our Life Services model in pilot settings.

I am Karin VanZant, Executive Director of Life Services at CareSource. I am excited to lead the Life Services team as we assess our members' individual strengths, identify obstacles and provide resources to help them navigate life's journey. The mission of Life Services is to make a sustained impact in our member's lives by effectively addressing the obstacles that impede progress in a member's journey toward self-sufficiency, improved health and well-being.

Many of CareSource's members are healthy, highly motivated individuals with a strong desire to be gainfully employed, but have barriers that prevent them from finding and keeping long term sustainable employment. We understand our members can be significantly more successful at obtaining and retaining employment when an over-arching, holistic view of their personal circumstances is taken into account when delivering wrap around support services.

The following scenario provides an example of needs and obstacles facing our members and how a holistic, person-centered approach can make the difference in achieving self-sufficiency.

Example scenario for a Life Services member:

Mary has lived in Dayton since 2002 and has held multiple part-time jobs. Most of her employment has been focused on fast food and retail and the longest she was able to keep a job has been 9 months. Mary has three children. She lives in Section 8 housing, receives SNAP benefits and is a CareSource member. There have been some months that she has received assistance from food pantries and social service organizations. She regularly receives HEAP benefits in the winter for fuel and in the summer due to her child have asthma. She currently owes \$2,500 in back utility payments. Mary wants to go to college but cannot see how she possibly can with parenting 3 children, working part-time jobs and trying to keep her benefits on at the various organizations that help her to maintain her household.

Currently Mary is working with:

- 1. JFS for SNAP and childcare*
- 2. Workforce Development to assist with job search*
- 3. Section 8 for housing*
- 4. CareSource for Medicaid – one child has chronic asthma & Mary has depression*
- 5. Dayton Public Schools – two children are on IEP, Latchkey and Free & Reduced Breakfast/Lunch program*
- 6. Community Action – HEAP*
- 7. Foodbank – supplemental food supports*

In addition, Mary works 20-22 hours a week at a local fast food chain at \$8.10 per hour. She gets her schedule 10 days in advance but there are always changes and some weeks her hours get cut. Last year Mary qualified for EITC benefits which she used to pay bills ahead several months and pay off a loan that helped her fix her car. Mary is working hard, wearing several hats and still barely keeping her and her family's head above water.

Life Services can assist Mary to make changes that will benefit her and her children for the short and long term. Here is the scenario of what Mary's life could look like in the next 12 months:

Mary decides to enroll in CareSource Life Services. The Life Services Member Team begins working with Mary to establish what her goals are, what strengths and skills she has and to determine a path that will lead her to economic stability. During this time, Mary also meets with a Community Advocate to determine the level of public benefits her family is currently receiving and map a path to subsidy freedom. This map will include the wage she would need to make and the timeframe in which benefits will begin to decrease. Together Mary and the Community Advocate will build a plan that will slowly replace these benefits before they end and allow her to have a smooth transition off benefits.

Mary will be given various opportunities to engage in training via CareSource University and continue to build her skills until she is matched with a local employer offering a full

time opportunity with benefits and begins working. Once she begins employment, Mary will begin meeting with a Life Coach that will assist Mary to develop a career path for advancement that may include technical training, professional development or college. This is where many Workforce Development Programs stop – but not at CareSource.

This is just the beginning.

As Mary becomes stable in her new employment opportunity she will start to see the benefit plan take shape. She will report new income to JFS and subsidy timelines will begin that could completely take away a benefit she is depending on. CareSource knows this and will begin to work with the member on day 1 of employment to secure a plan for transition. Examples include:

- *From no transportation to public transportation to private transportation.*
- *From 100% food budget SNAP to 50% SNAP and income to 100% income*
- *From 100% childcare subsidy to 75% childcare subsidy and 25% income, etc.*
- *From Section 8 to fair market rent to home ownership*

The Life Services' members will have an opportunity to set individual goals that will lead them to a life that is free from government subsidy and built on a strong foundation of economic stability. This will not be an easy transition. For some of our members, they have never known a life that did not include government subsidies; they have never budgeted fully for food, rent, utilities and childcare. But most of them would love to live a life free and independent of subsidies and to provide fully for their family. Life Services will assist them to see the path to this future.

The Life Services model is a transformative strategy that recognizes the diverse challenges facing our members. The model includes wrap around services but also includes an employment component, JobConnect. This employment component will target situational barriers that prevent individuals from stable employment. Members will have the opportunity to receive support and skill development as well as continuous support including access to life coaches, assessments, education, stabilization, health care, job training, financial assistance, soft skills training and support services.

CareSource is committed to improving the lives of our members and it is through this commitment that the Life Services model was developed. As budget discussions continue, we look forward to the opportunity to speak with the committee further on this exciting innovation and to share our vision for improving the lives our members.