



independence inc.

2025

ANNUAL REPORT

A YEAR OF POSSIBILITY



What made
2025

A year of Possibility

for Independence, Inc.?



Opportunity (pg. 4)

In 2025, we had the opportunity to take on two new counties and to build a new youth transition program - the Kansas Youth Transition Network (KYTN) Program. We opened an office in Kansas City, KS, hired new staff and began serving Wyandotte and Johnson Counties with our Core Services and Wyandotte County with our KYTN Program. We put boots to the ground and began daily outreach to our new communities including schools, service providers, advocates and others in order to build a true network of resources and partnerships to serve our new territories. Our Kansas City office is now a thriving, integrated part of the community as we serve youth and adults with disabilities in Kansas City, KS.



Problem-Solving (pg. 6)

How does a team come together and figure out how to address the needs of a growing number of consumers and territories? Problem-solving! We spent much of the year doing just this - assessing needs, adjusting to them and filling our offices with qualified disability advocates and independent living specialist superstars who know what it means to help someone see their full potential and reach their goals.



Teamwork (pg. 8)

We added new staff to almost every department in our organization including Core Services, Financial Management Services (FMS), Working Healthy WORK and STEPS Programs, and our Kansas Youth Transition Network Program. Each of these departments is experiencing growth and we are filling in the gaps with incredible teamwork and the right people to bring service excellence to our consumers and communities.



Investing (pg. 10)

if you know our team, you know we're not afraid of investment! Whether that's financial investment to improve a program or hire new staff, investing time into planning and developing new services and delivery methods, investing in consumers, or investing in our staff to train, support and assist them to be the best they can be - we invest so YOU can live the most independent life possible in the environment and home of your choice.



Core Services SUCCESS HIGHLIGHT

“Brandon Seepersad (above) of Lawrence, has been working with Independence Inc. for approximately a year. He has been working on self-advocacy goals to make independent living easier for himself. He has been working hard towards self-care and making the right choices. It has not been easy for Brandon to realize that he is his own best advocate, and he knows that if he needs assistance, the staff here at Independence Inc. are happy to assist him and offer support with his goals to keep him focused. He has attended some Peer Counseling sessions with Grace Starr, Independent Living and Peer Support Specialist, and has worked with Rex Ellebracht, Independent Living Specialist, on applications for disability. Brandon considers himself ‘a work in progress’ and is very thankful for finding an agency like Independence Inc. to support him in gaining independence.”

-Rex Ellebracht, ILS, Independence Inc.





Opportunity...



Gaining traction - and counties - in Kansas City, KS

When the opportunity presented itself for Independence, Inc. to expand services into two new Kansas City area counties, we jumped at the chance. Growth, capacity building, and refining are words and concepts always in our minds as we seek to adapt and respond to the needs around us. As we were working towards this new expansion, another opportunity was in our path - and the two made perfect partners.

The Kansas Youth Transition Network (KYTN) was established through a Federal Department of Education, Pathways to Partnership grant, allowing us to bolster our Youth Transition Services with innovation, partnerships and increased staff. Our Kansas City office opened in June of 2025 and is now home to our Core Services for Johnson and Wyandotte Counties and our KYTN Program for Wyandotte County.



Opportunity through our KYTN Program **SUCCESS HIGHLIGHT**

Where do we start if our goal is to reach youth with innovative opportunities for transition training and independent living support? Outreach to schools!

Throughout 2025, Independence, Inc. joined forces with our community partners and offered professional development opportunities for teachers and paraprofessional staff. From presenting details of our programs and services to giving a deep-dive look at transition skill-building for youth and young adults, we were able to share in front of captive audiences, all about the work we are doing in our communities and how we can support not only students, but families and staff as well. At our August 6, 2025 training (pictured above) we enjoyed a record turnout of Special Education staff who, over the course of 3 training periods, engaged, learned, asked questions and referred students to our program in record numbers. It helps that we feed them and provide snacks throughout!





Problem-Solving...

"IDEA" STRATEGY



IDENTIFY

Recognize and pinpoint the specific problem, challenge, or goal. Take the time to clearly state what is happening that needs addressed.



DEFINE

Clarify and represent the problem clearly. Set clear criteria, establish boundaries, and decide exactly what a successful outcome looks like..



EXPLORE

Brainstorm and evaluate potential strategies or solutions. Look at the pros and cons of different options without restricting yourself to your very first thought.



ACTION

Choose the best strategy and put the plan into motion. Assign responsibilities, set a timeline, and actively execute your chosen solution.

Challenges occur in every type of organization and system - but with challenge comes opportunity, change and growth. When one of our Sedgwick County **Working Healthy WORK** participants was met with some complex housing challenges including a severe insect infestation in their rental apartment, one of our **WORK program** counselors started the problem-solving process. The delayed treatment of the infestation posed a health risk, causing their personal care assistant services to pause and forcing a temporary break in employment until the infestation was eliminated and no longer posed a threat to others who may come into contact with the resident.

With coordinated efforts between our staff, the Center for Independent Living that covers this participant's county with core services, the Aging and Disability Resource Center and Adult Protective Services, a plan was set in place and the landlord was compelled to complete the necessary treatments for safe and healthy living conditions, leading to restored employment and personal care services.



Problem-solving through community collaboration **SUCCESS HIGHLIGHT**

Serving in an underserved community can be challenging. When we saw a need to reach young men in the foster care system with transition services, we knew we had to problem-solve to fill this gap. Through strategic outreach, In May of 2025, we were able to meet with the Director and staff of Resilient Transitions, LLC - a transitional living program for youth ages 16-21 who are aging out of the foster care system. We began discussions on collaborative efforts to provide these young men with independent living and employment-readiness skills to prepare them for a successful transition out of foster care and into future independence. We quickly built a structured program to provide the training, opportunities and support needed for these young men to enter into adult life with effective tools to thrive in adulthood, including GED aquisition, life skills, resume-writing, mock interviews, job search assistance and more.



Teamwork...



Core Services and KYTN Program staff in our Kansas City office pose for a holiday photo.

team·work
/ˈtēm.wərk/

**“The combined action of a group,
especially when effective and efficient”**

We added new staff to almost every department in our organization including Core Services, Financial Management Services (FMS), Working Healthy WORK and STEPS Programs, and our Kansas Youth Transition Network (KYTN) Program. Each of these departments is experiencing growth and we are filling in the gaps with incredible teamwork and the right people to bring service excellence to our consumers and communities.

From brainstorming sessions to strategic planning and regular staff meetings, our staff not only work with and offer support across departments, but across city limit lines as well. Though our Lawrence office serves Douglas, Jefferson and Franklin counties and our Kansas City office serves Wyandotte and Johnson counties, the idea-sharing, collaboration and support has no location. From department to department, team to team and location to location, we are all in it together. And it shows!



Teamwork through Disability Mentoring Day

SUCCESS HIGHLIGHT

Within just a few weeks of being in our new Kansas City office, we received an invitation to join a group of community leaders working together to organize an annual Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) event. DMD is a nationally-recognized initiative to engage and train youth in employment-readiness, coinciding with National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) each October.

Several of our KC staff jumped right in and offered valuable resources, ideas, staffing support and training leadership to the event, with one staff member (KYTN Program Manager, pictured above) hosting a "Thinking Outside the Box Resume-Writing" workshop to about 50 youth and young adults.

With the seasoned DMD coordinators already in place, our unique and fresh perspective, and a whole lot of hard work from volunteers, DMD 2025 - held at MidAmerica Nazarene University - saw a record number of attendees (over 200!) who received tools, trainings and connections they need to move forward in their journey to employment.



Investing...



2025 National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Conference participants take to the streets of Washington D.C. to remind us that no policy, program or decision should be made without full participation of the very people directly affected by it. One way Independence, Inc. invests in staff training and capacity building is by sending staff to the NCIL Conference, offered annually.

invest
/in·vest/

involve, engage or commit time, effort or money into something with the expectation of generating a benefit, or improved advantage

If there's one thing we do well here at Independence, Inc. (there's actually a lot of things!) it's understanding that the foundation of building effective programs, services, community impact and dedicated staff is to **invest**. Research leads to brainstorming, which leads to idea-building and strategic planning and then comes investment. And whether it's time, brain power, training, outreach, collaboration, or money, skilled and purposeful investment is key to reaching our goals including: direct impact on the lives of our consumers, building a stronger, more healthy, inclusive, accessible community, creating policy change and creating sustainable funding sources. We also exercise an unwavering commitment to **capacity building: the continuous process of developing and strengthening the skills, abilities, processes, and resources needed to survive, adapt, and thrive**. Through every political season, every societal shift, every policy change and every community growth or diversification, we have our pulse on what impacts our organization and our consumers and are ready to adapt, pivot, grow and create in order to serve YOU with the best staff, programs and services to help ensure independent living for all.



Investing through Transportation **SUCCESS HIGHLIGHT**

From one of our valued transportation consumers:

"My husband Galen was devastated that he couldn't take me to my doctor's appointment but he needn't have worried. I contacted Bryan who manages the driver's and vehicles and he was very efficient, taking my name and gathering needed information. My first ride was with Chip, who quickly wheeled my chair into the van and safely strapped it into place. I had a wonderful ride chatting with Chip and as I arrived at LMH, he took me inside and made sure a volunteer was there to assist me. On my return ride home, Max was my driver and he was equally efficient with my wheelchair and securing it into place. It was a wonderful ride home and a nice chat with Max. My husband was relieved that he had nothing to worry about and I had a great experience."



#By the Numbers...



➤ **Advocacy Services**
79 consumers completed Advocacy goals in 2025



➤ **General Public Transportation**
4,920 total Rides were provided in 2025



➤ **Housing Services:**
162 consumers received housing services in 2025



➤ **Information & Referral:**
1,257 consumers received information and referral services in 2025



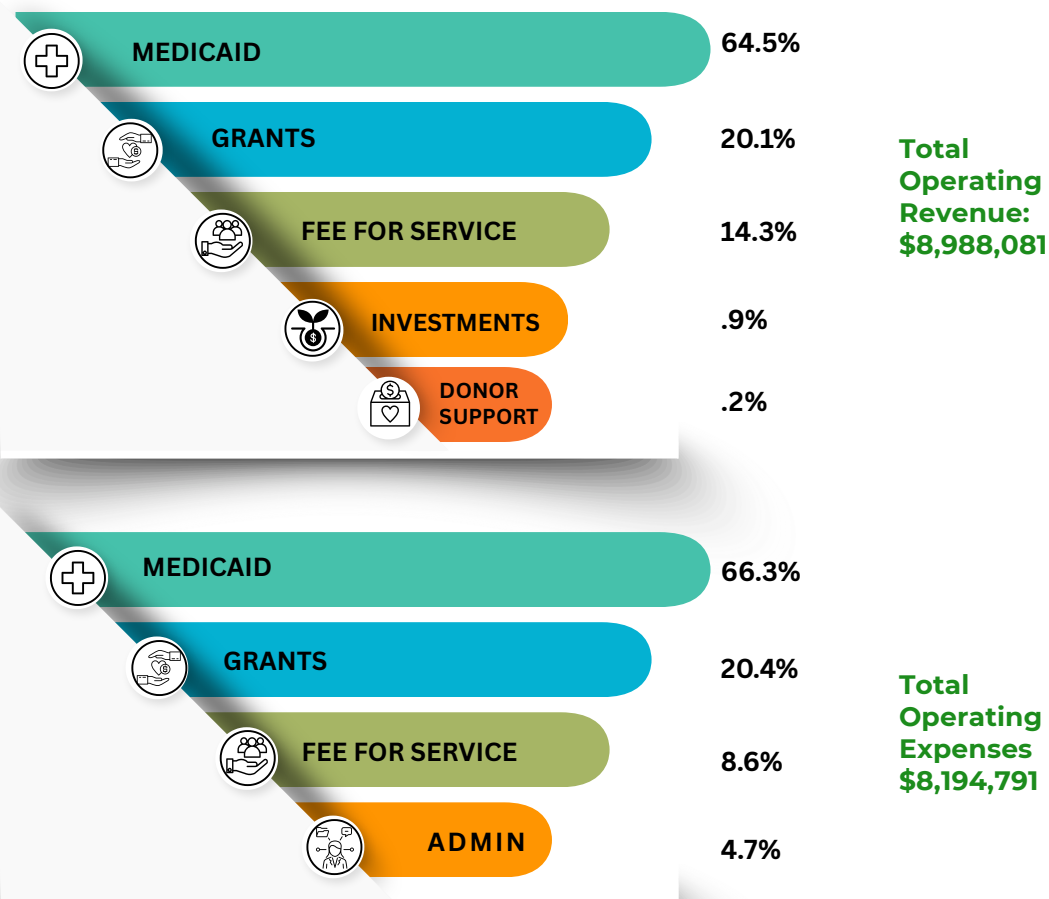
➤ **Employment Services:**
182 consumers received vocational services to assist with finding and maintaining employment and/or receiving employment-related services



➤ **Equipment Loan Bank:**
740 consumers borrowed medical equipment from our loan bank to help them live independently

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

FY 2025



Meet the Board

Independence, Inc. 2025 Board of Directors

- Kevin Elliot**, Board Member

Matthew Gabel, Secretary

Athena Johnson, Board Member

Alex Kerr, Board Member

Ruth Lichtwardt, Board Member
- Lara Mann**, Board Member

Angela Motsinger, Treasurer

Kyle Owens, Board Member

Dustin Stumblingbear, President

Craig Weinaug, Vice President

Letter from the Executive Director



A Year of Possibility

This year has been defined by possibility — the opportunity to grow, strengthen our impact, and expand access to independent living services across Kansas. As our organization continued reaching communities beyond our traditional service area, we focused on creating meaningful opportunities through stronger partnerships, expanded services, and community-based staff presence. With growth came new challenges, but our team remained committed to problem-solving and developing responsive, person-centered solutions that addressed barriers related to housing, transportation, employment, and access to resources. These efforts allowed us to better serve individuals with disabilities while strengthening the systems and connections that support long-term independence. The progress made this year would not have been possible without the dedication of our staff, board members, partners, and consumers. Through teamwork, collaboration, and a shared commitment to our mission, we continued building the culture we want reflected throughout our organization — one grounded in respect, inclusion, accountability, and service. We also made important investments in staff development, infrastructure, technology, and statewide capacity to ensure sustainable growth for the future. As we look ahead, we remain inspired by what is possible when communities come together to advance independence and opportunity for all.

Thank you for your continued support, partnership, and belief in the mission of our Center for Independent Living.

Sincerely,
Jill Dudley
Executive Director



Our Supporters...

\$14,738 total donations received in Fiscal Year 2025

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Jewell Willhite

Cindy Williams

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Glen White

Window Restoration of Lawrence

Molly Wood

Eleanor Woodyard

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Give Now to Support People with Disabilities in our Communities!

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