Polk County Mental Health & Disability Services Region

Calendar Year 2022 Community-Based Employment

Outcomes Evaluation

LAW, HEALTH POLICY & DISABILITY CENTER

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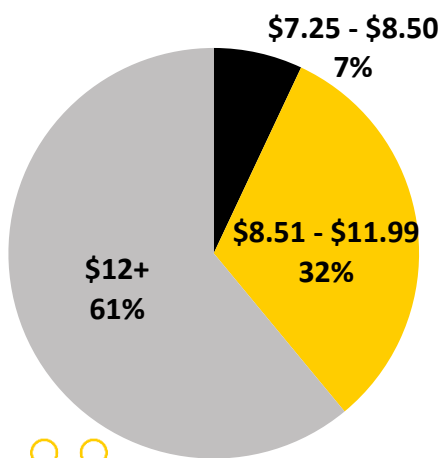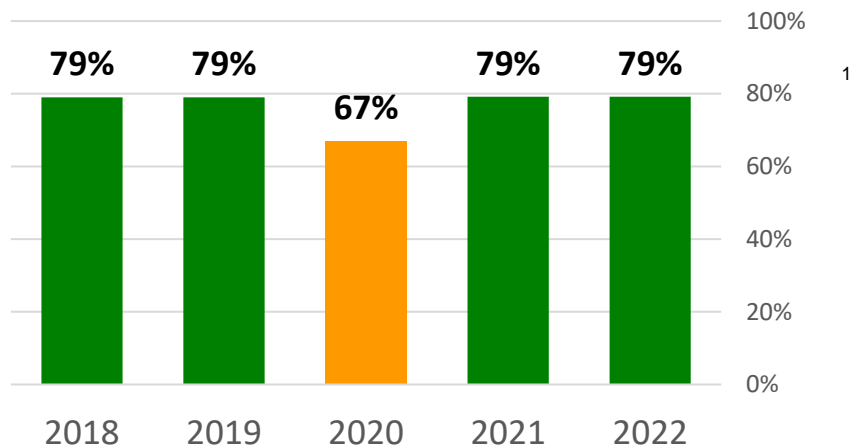**Iowa City, Iowa 52242**

Executive Summary

Overall system performance

maintained system performance averages to *Meet Expectations* at 79% in 2022.

During the evaluation period, data management shifted from the PolkMIS application (ended on 6/30/2023) to CSN.

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
79%	79%	67%	79%	79%

[1]

$7.25 - $8.50
7%

$8.51 - $11.99
32%

$12+
61%

The average hourly wage of participants in 2022 was **$11.95, a 13.6% increase** from $10.52 in 2021, and highest rate reported in the last five years.

In 2022, 69% of Community-Based Employment participants were continuously employed for a year or more.

In 2022, the **proportion of participants working in a *Retail Sales* setting continued to increase**, remaining the most common employment setting for Community-Based Employment participants

Additionally, *weekly wages* were higher in 2022 compared to all previous years.

Despite unprecedented challenges, participant satisfaction with services (97%) remained consistently high, increasing by 2% in 2022 (from 95% in 2021).

"I've had a stable job for almost four years and the job coaches take good care of me at work and make sure I'm independent and make sure that I stay stable at my job."

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[1] The wage chart shown is missing data for one agency for one quarter of the reporting period

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Community-Based Employment Evaluation Results Summary

In this sixteenth year, the Community-Based Employment Evaluation shows that the community-based employment network, with a system average of 79%, is *Meeting Expectations* in supporting individuals to prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment. Due to data management system shifting from PolkMIS (6/60/22), data in this report was compiled through a combination of the PolkMIS business intelligence reports and Access database reports.

Figure 1. 2022 Overall Performance by Agency
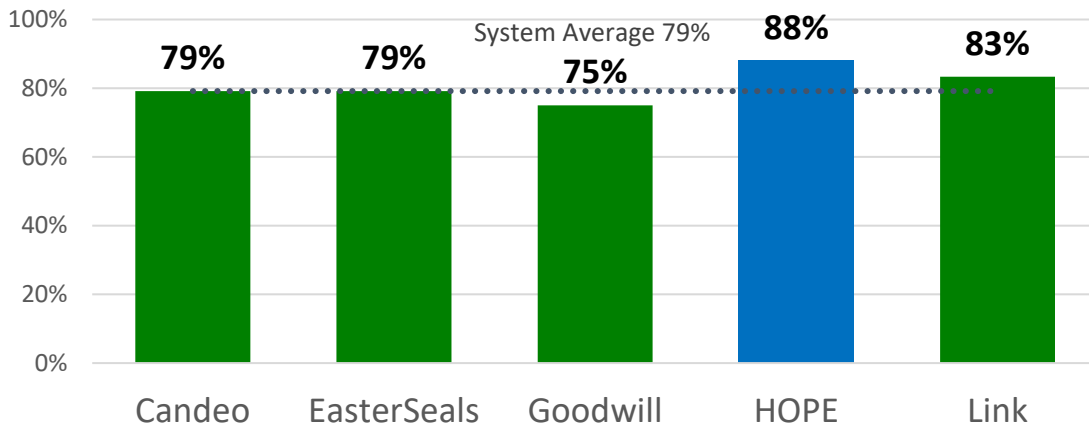
Four Community-Based Employment agencies *Met Expectations* for Overall Performance in 2022, and one agency *Exceeded Expectations* (Figure 1).

Individuals with intellectual disabilities were most of the system population in 2022, comprising 82% of the overall Community Based Employment participants. (Figure 2).

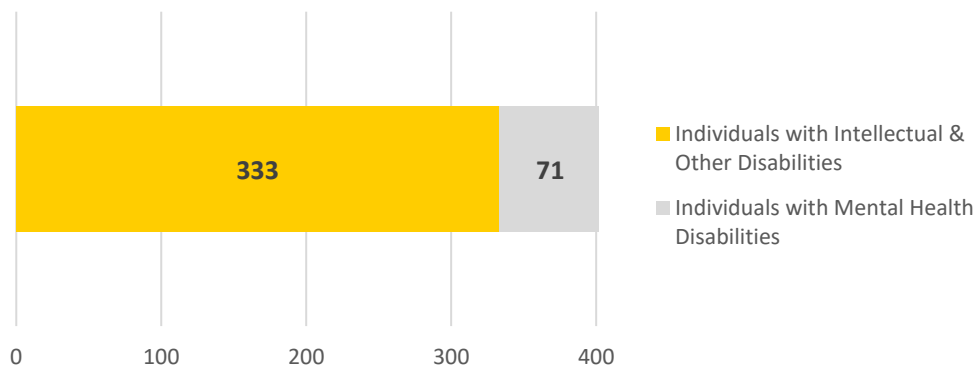**Figure 2. 2022 System Participants by Disability Type**

Table 1. 2022 Summary Table Performance

	Candeo	EasterSeals	Goodwill	HOPE	Link	System Average
Barriers to Employment	4.5	3.4	4.7	1.2	5.6	3.9
Engaged Toward Employment	88%	73%	77%	85%	87%	81%
Working Toward Self-Sufficiency	18%	39%	20%	42%	20%	29%
Negative Disenrollment	0.00%	0.00%	0.40%	0.00%	0.00%	0.08%
File Review	100%	100%	97%	100%	100%	99%
Participant Satisfaction	93%	98%	97%	98%	98%	97%
Agency Overall Performance	80%	85%	80%	95%	85%	85%

Table 2. 2022 Summary Table Scores

	Candeo	EasterSeals	Goodwill	HOPE	Link	System Average
Barriers to Employment	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Engaged Toward Employment	3	1	2	3	3	2
Working Toward Self-Sufficiency	2	4	2	4	2	3
Negative Disenrollment	4	4	4	4	4	4
File Review	4	4	4	4	4	4
Participant Satisfaction	3	4	4	4	4	4
Agency Overall Performance	3	3	3	4	3	3

PROVIDER PERSPECTIVES

Community Based Employment providers in the PCMHDS network shared experiences of challenges and successes during the evaluation period at the **Client**, **Organization**, and **System** level:

Client Level:

- Transportation continues to be a barrier, limiting employment opportunities and causing lateness or absences.
    - Transportation methods such as Uber and the public bus route have shortcomings.
    - Transportation deficits limit where an individual can work and for how many hours.
- More natural supports are needed in the work environment, with training for those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and better communication for those with invisible disabilities.
- One agency reported being hindered in maximizing Medicaid funding which directly impacts their ability to keep moving at a competitive rate. Further, waitlists for counselors, ESL services, and employment services all affect the bottom line.
- Successful outcomes include clients graduating from programs, gaining independence, and benefiting from small business natural supports.
- One agency reported utilizing social media to celebrate client achievements and engage with the community.

Organization Level:

- Several agencies described that staffing deficits continue to be a barrier, asserting they could increase work hours and supports if they had the capacity to do so.
- Competitive wages, strong referral program, and efforts to survey and improve onboarding processes.
- One agency explained that many people quitting jobs during COVID and are now coming out of it and finding newfound purpose in helping people.
    - *"We survived – last year was a building year – we're going to get it back."*
- One agency stated they are being competitive with wages.
    - *"We're making sure our employees are happy and healthy, and surveying the community to see what we can offer them."*
- One agency reported a strong referral program, with referrals from friends being particularly effective. Add to that, non-traditional virtual and physical training. Further still, they are surveying current employees and making efforts to gauge onboarding processes.

System Level:

- Managed care has less turnover but is short staffed in regional offices.
    - One agency explained managed care has less turnover because of the salaries they are able to offer, but they are down four counselors in their regional office.
    - One agency reported that identifying and communicating with MCO case managers is a challenge, creating disruptions to pre-authorizations.
- Vocational Rehabilitation is moving to the Department of Education, which will force current staff to reapply to be rehired.
- One agency reported that less reliance on MCO's for referrals (e.g., diverse referral sources) is good overall.
- Agencies reported Polk County is unique and works well together, and agencies have a good understanding of where clients may be best placed.

Additional comments:

- Medicaid reimbursement rates for services are insufficient, and there is a support for data-driven metrics to improve retention.
    - *"Developing a matrix to best support us in being proactive in our efforts to serve clients."*
- Strengthening communication among organizations and educating the community about the value of disabled individuals is necessary.
- Access to services is complicated, and there is an increased need for mental health supports.
- One agency explained maintaining a consistent workforce is not an easy solution.
    - Needs and services across program participants are unique to the individual.
    - The process to access and enroll in services is complex and lengthy.
    - The system is not easy for providers or participants to navigate.
    - There is also an increased demand for mental health supports generally following COVID.
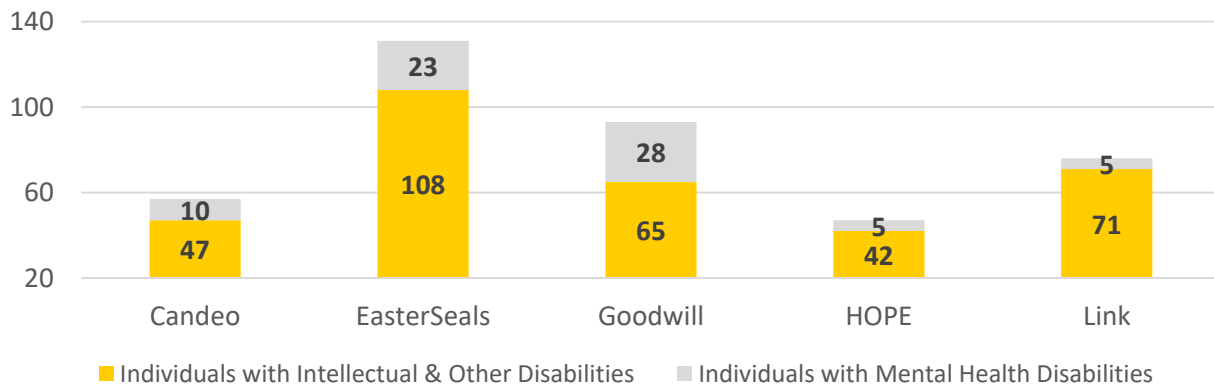
Employment Metrics

DEMOGRAPHICS

Over the past five years, the Polk County MHDS Region has experienced fluctuations in the number of individuals served (Figure 3). From 2018 to 2019, the Polk County Region saw an increase in average participants enrolled, from 434 to 468. Since 2019, the employment system has seen a general decrease in individuals served. Calendar Year 2020 showed a marked decrease in individuals served from 2019, from 468 to 439. The decrease continued from 2020 to 2021 by 39 and has just recently increased by one in 2022 (401).

Figure 3. Annual Average Participants Enrolled [Count]
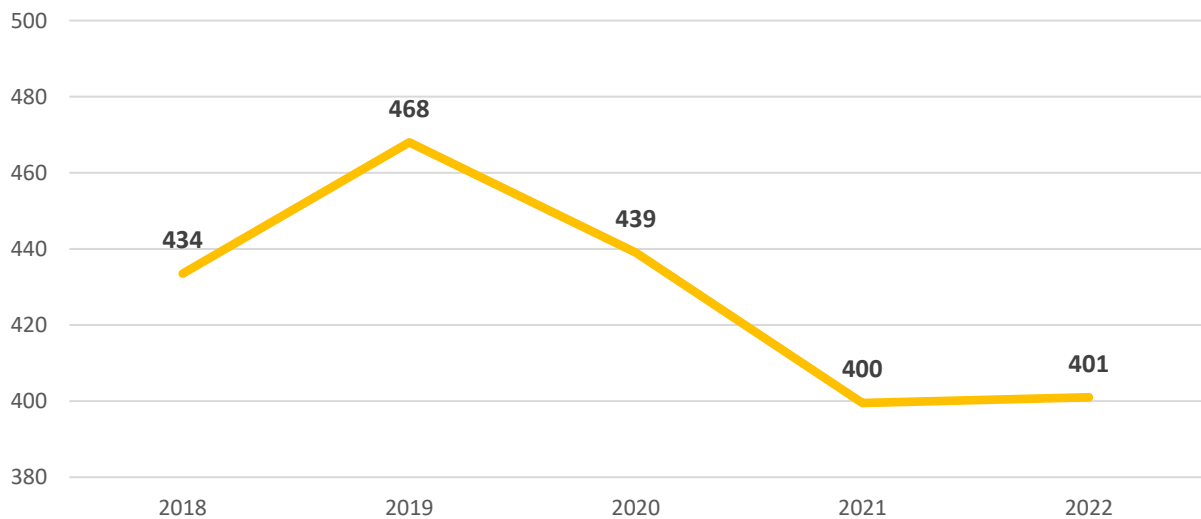
The system served individuals with intellectual and other disabilities. In 2022, all agencies provided more services to individuals with intellectual disabilities. Two agencies served only five individuals with mental health disabilities whereas two other agencies served over 20 individuals with mental health disabilities. Agencies served, on average, approximately one individual with mental health disabilities for every four individuals with intellectual and other disabilities (Figure 4).

Figure 4. 2022 Participant Disability Status by Agency

PARTICIPANT EARNINGS
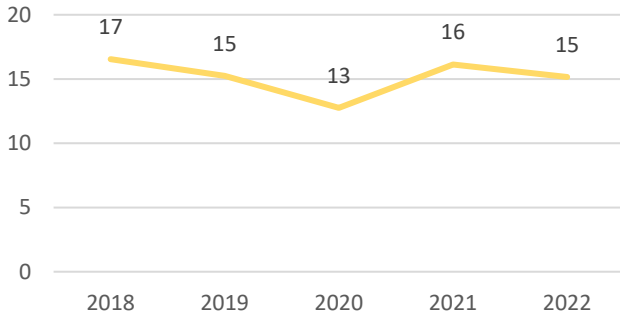
Figure 5. Average Weekly Hours Worked

Figure 5 - Figure 7 show 5-year trends (2018 - 2022) in three employment measures for Polk County Mental Health & Disability Services Community-Based Employment participants.

Participant hours worked per week decreased by 1 hour, averaging 15 hours worked per week.

Figure 5 shows the changes in average weekly hours worked from 2018 – 2022. The average number of hours worked in 2022, 15 hours, is similar to the average number of hours worked across the 5 years, 15.2 hours.

Figure 6. Average Hourly Wages
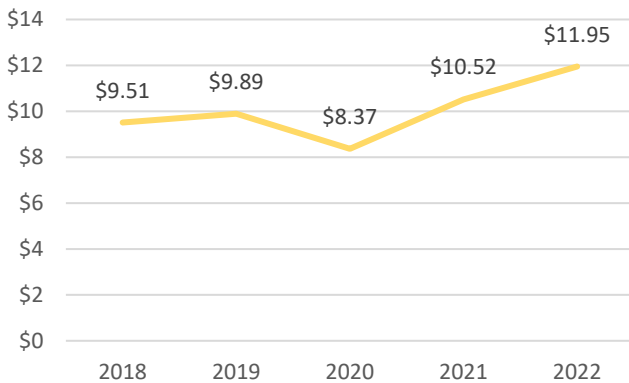
Average hourly wages showed a steady, incremental upward trend through 2019, with a notable decrease in 2020 to $8.37 per hour (Figure 6). **In 2022, average hourly wages increased by $1.43 to $11.95 per hour, the highest hourly wage in the 5 year-period.** In the 5 years, wages have increased by $2.44 since 2018.

Average hourly wages increased steadily from 2020 – 2022, despite the average for hours worked per week increasing in 2021 and decreasing, slightly, in 2022.

Figure 7. Average Participant Weekly Wage
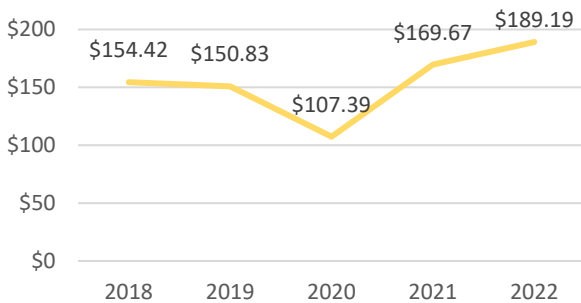
Community-Based Employment participants continue to see an increase in wages in 2022. **Since 2020, the lowest average in the last 5 years, average weekly wages have increased by $81.80 (Figure 7).**

PROVIDER PERSPECTIVES

Employment Metrics

- Agencies struggle with limited staffing and capacity, which restricts their ability to meet the demand for services.

- Providers have been receiving referrals but can't always move forward due to inconsistent staffing patterns and full caseloads.

- There are inadequate staffing and high demand that need to be addressed to improve outcomes.

- There is a pattern of IDD vs. mental health disability status, and agencies are not licensed to serve the MH population, which affects the referrals they can handle.

Participant Earnings:

- Agencies attributed high wages to supportive community members, who believe in paying sustainable wages.

- Employers pay employees in CBE programs equitably (same rate as non-CBE program employees), and the job market/employers competing with one another drives the wages up in general.

- Agencies need more coaches to be able to serve more clients, and high wages come from community members who understand the agency's mission.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Timely delivery of employment services is critical to maintain participant engagement and leverage participants' readiness for employment towards a positive transition into employment. To assess the efficiency of services, the Polk County MHDS Region asks agencies to report data on how long individuals wait to access services (i.e., agency wait lists), time to find employment, status of participant employment preparation and search, length of retention once employment is secured, and types of jobs where participants are employed.

- In 2022, more than three-quarters (77%) of Community-Based Employment participants were employed, a 4% increase from 73% in 2021
- About another fifth of participants were in *Job Development* (20%).
- A few (2%) participants were in *Accepted, not working/ HOLD* status
- A few (1%) participants were in *Employment Prep* status

Figure 8. Polk County MHDS Region Network Employment Status 2022 by agency[2]
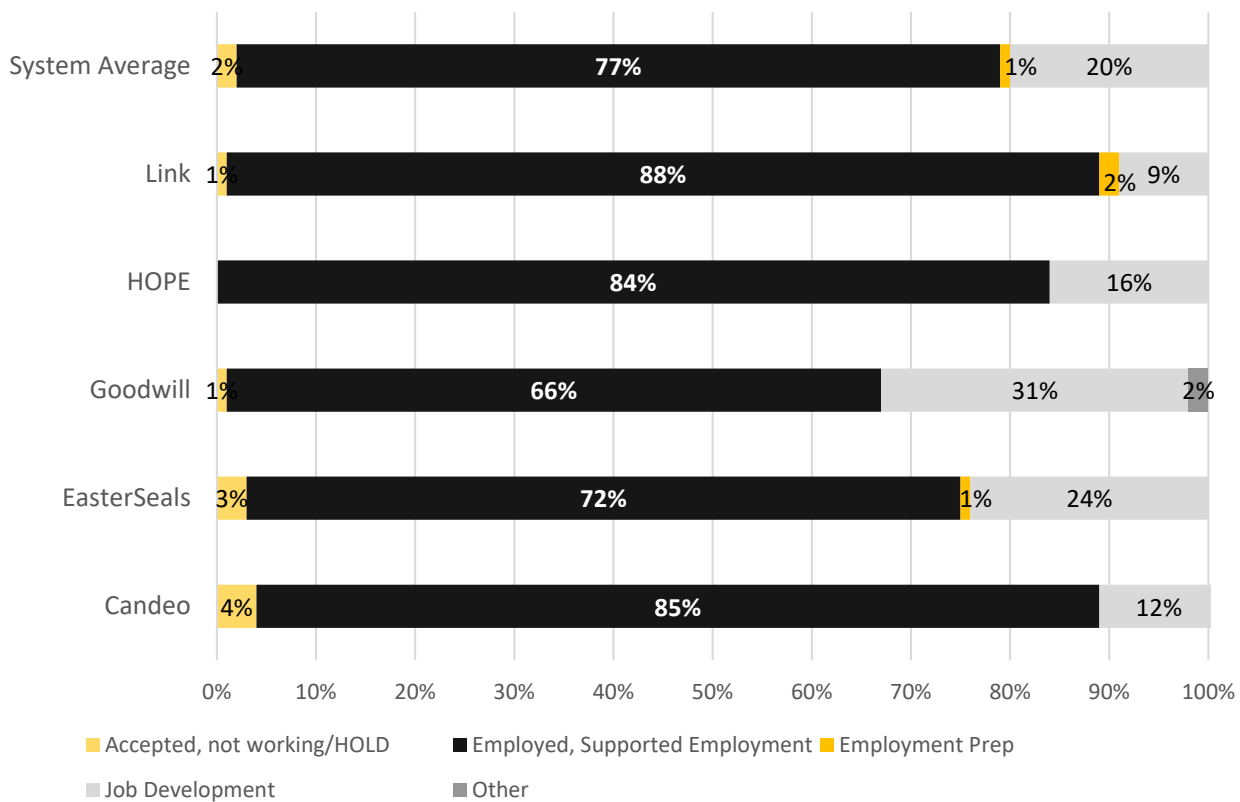
PROVIDER PERSPECTIVES

Employment Settings:

- o The employment settings were consistent with the previous year and have not been entered in CSN (the data management system which replaced PolkMIS) yet.

- o Accurate wages and hours are submitted to MCOs, and the employment settings trends reflect the overall market.

Barriers To Employment:

- o Agencies reported data entry consistency and integrity issues, and the reported barriers may not reflect all the barriers.

- o Challenges once employed include transportation, job coach shortage, turnover at businesses – which contributes to inconsistent availability of employment-based natural supports.

Employment:

- o Limited availability of coaching support affect how many hours CBE participants can work.

- o Fluctuation in work available over the year was reported by agencies, such as hours cut after December (retail hours tend to be lower - after holidays, hours plummet.

Participant Satisfaction:

- o Guardians and natural supports have an idea of what they think is best for participants, may be different than what participant wants (agencies prioritize participant-led planning).

EMPLOYMENT RETENTION

Employment retention is a metric of continuous employment (not necessarily in the same job) for Community-Based Employment participants.

- In 2022, 69% of Community-Based Employment participants were continuously employed for a year or more (Figure 10).
- Compared to 2021, the category for participants with less than 3 months of continuous employment decreased from 9% to 3%, the lowest percentage in the past 3 years (Figure 10).
- Across agencies in 2022, four out of five averaged over 20% for participants who have been employed for over 5 years. The remaining agency had the highest average percentage of participants employed for 2–5 years (Figure 9).

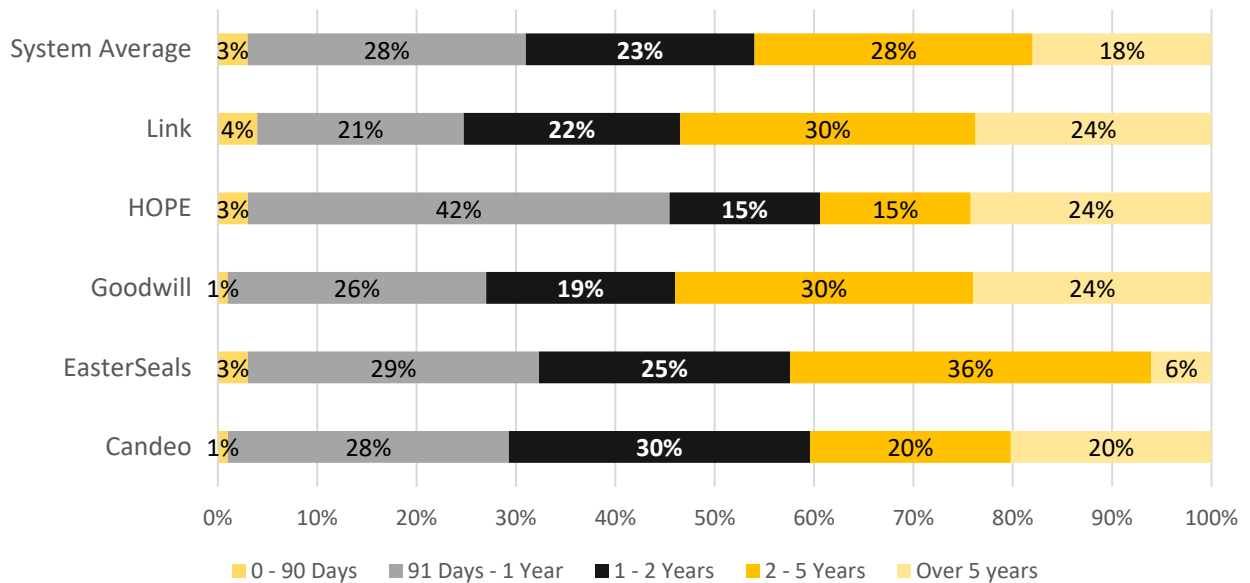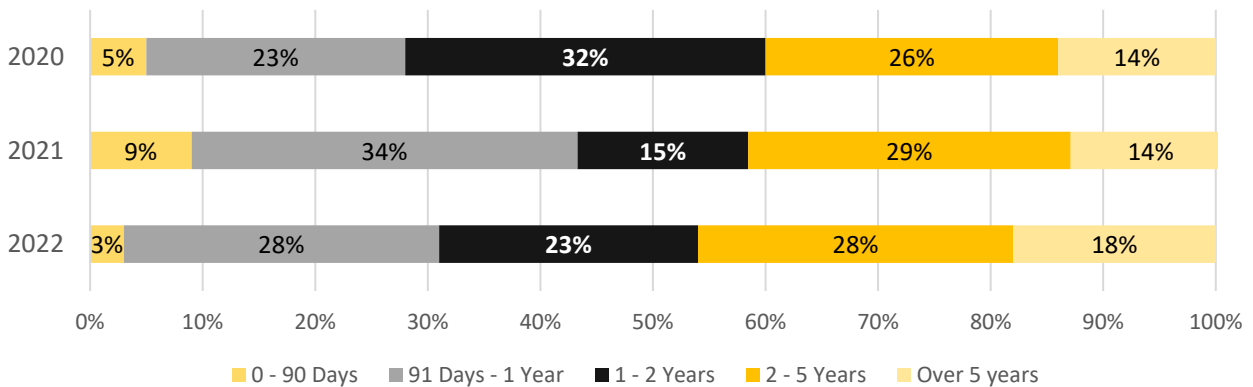**Figure 9. Polk County Network Employment Retention Status 2022 by Agency**

**Figure 10. Employment Retention 2020-2022**

EMPLOYMENT SETTINGS

2022 Community-Based Employment participants worked in a variety of settings.

- In 2022, the **proportion of participants working in a *Retail Sales* setting continued to increase**, remaining the most common employment setting for Community-Based Employment participants (Figure 11).

- The proportion of participants working in *Housekeeping or Janitorial* settings remained the same from 2021 - 2022.

- The number of participants working in *Food Service* increased by 2% compared to 2021 and ranks the second most common employment setting for participants.

- Employment in other sectors including *Daycares or Human Services, Assembly or Manufacturing*, *Office, or Clerical,* and *Other* remains infrequent at <5%.

Figure 11. Employment Settings 5-year trend (2018-2022) *
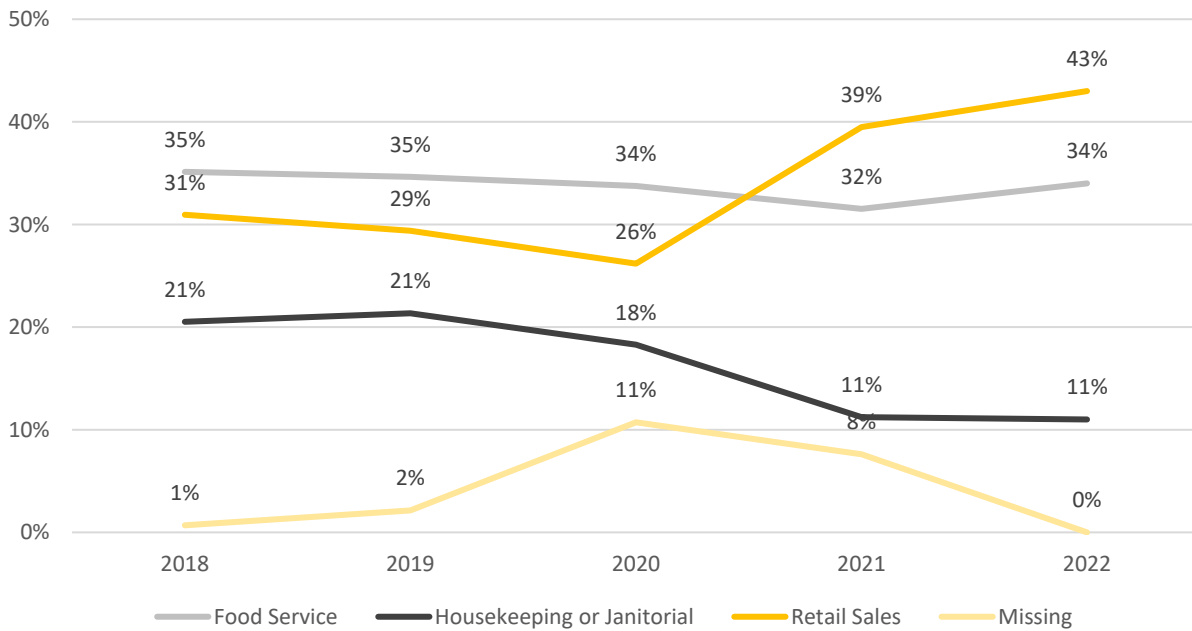
*Sectors with low participation are not shown (% from 2022 data), and include Daycare or Human Service (4%), Assembly or Manufacturing (2%), Office or Clerical (2%), and Other (3%)

Community-Based Employment Outcomes

To evaluate agency performance, the Polk County MHDS Region uses five outcome areas to assess service delivery. Each outcome area has thresholds established that determine four performance ratings and corresponding point values, namely *Exceeds Expectations (4), Meets Expectations (3), Needs Improvement (2), and Does Not Meet Minimum Expectations (1)*. Thresholds for each outcome are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Performance Thresholds by Outcome

Outcome	Does Not Meet Minimum Expectations 1	Needs Improvement 2	Meets Expectations 3	Exceeds Expectations 4
Barriers to Employment	NA	NA	NA	NA
Engagement in Employment	< 75%	75%-84%	85%-94%	95%+
Working Toward Self-Sufficiency	< 17%	17%-25%	26%-34%	35%+
Negative Disenrollment	≥ 4.00%	3% - 3.99%	1% - 2.99%	<.99%
File Review	< 85%	85% - 89%	90% - 94%	95%+
Participant Satisfaction	< 85%	85% - 89%	90% - 94%	95%+

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Regardless of the types of disabilities individuals may have, participants present with a wide range of needs and challenges.

Purpose/Goal

The goal of this outcome is to encourage organizations to provide community-based employment services to all participants, including participants whose needs are complex or require more resources to accommodate adequately.

This person-centered emphasis of the Polk County MHDS Region promotes services that include all, including participants with the highest needs. This approach does not necessarily aim for a high-needs population but an inclusive and balanced population to avoid creating a barrier to services by selectively enrolling only those who are most likely to be successful in employment and require the fewest services.
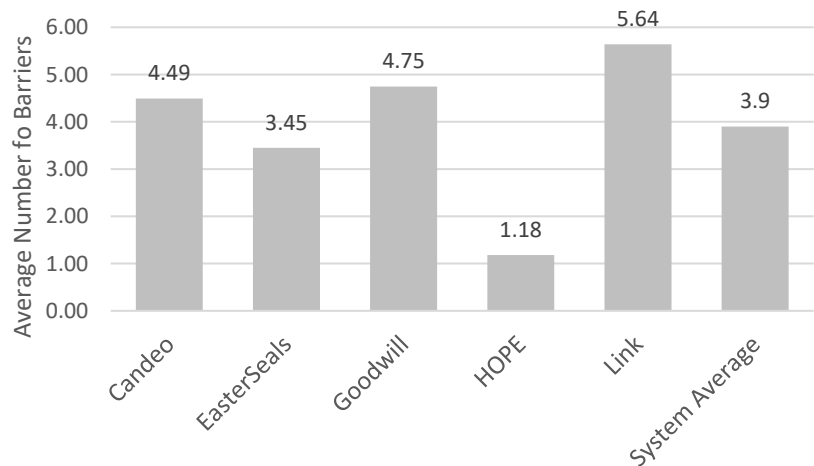
Scoring and Performance

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Polk County MHDS Region monitors the count and types of barriers to employment, which include:[3]

- Age
- Child Care
- Criminal Background
- Education
- Financial Disincentive
- Homelessness
- Limited Work History
- Paid Living Assistance
- Transportation
- Work Limited

Figure 12. Participant Barriers to Employment

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[3] Full definitions of Barriers to Employment in Appendix B

ENGAGEMENT TOWARD EMPLOYMENT

Metric	The percentage of employable individuals working 5 hours or more per week and earning the minimum wage or greater during the four weeks in two specified reporting periods (January 2022 and April 2022). Results are reported for programs with ten or more employment eligible individuals.
Intent	The number of program participants working toward self-sufficiency during the year will increase. The outcomes are intended to increase the employment rate of people with disabilities, wages, and assets.
Rationale	Unemployment is one of the most profound issues facing the disability community. Only 32% of Americans with disabilities aged 18 to 64 are working, but two-thirds of those who are unemployed say they would rather be working [source: The National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.)]. The Polk County MHDS Region recognizes that employment is not only a profound issue for the disability community, but also a key to self-sufficiency. "Most people … want to work, yet they face significant barriers in finding and keeping jobs, such as a limited number of jobs in communities, discrimination against people with mental illnesses, limited or compromised executive functioning skills among some consumers that hinder one's ability to perform and attend work, lack of supported employment programs, and inadequate transportation. With support, they can work in competitive jobs or start their own businesses, enabling them to increase their work activity and earnings over time." (SAMHSA.gov)

Performance Ratings	Exceeds Expectations 4 95%+	Meets Expectations 3 85%-94%	Needs Improvement 2 75%-84%	Does Not Meet Minimum Expectations 1 <75%

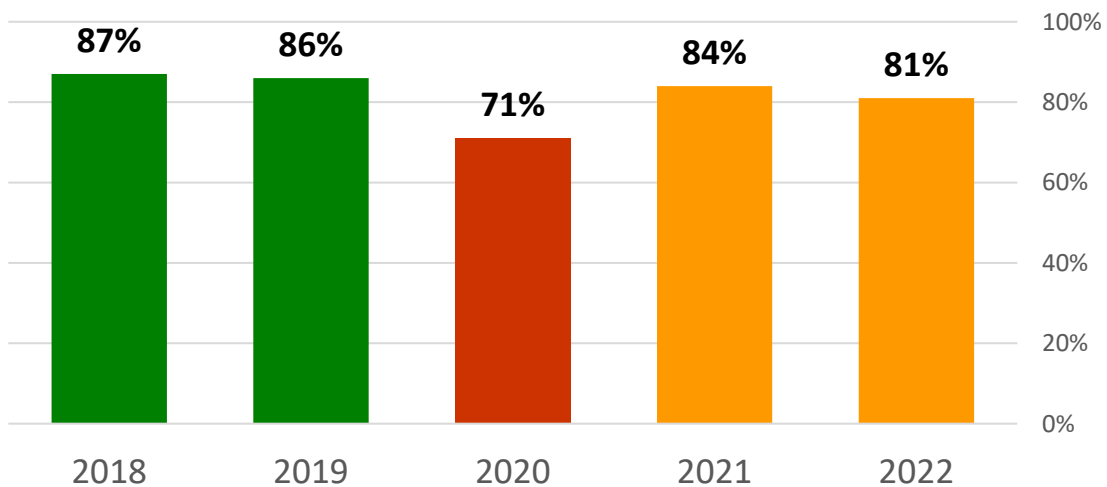For the **Engaged in Employment** outcome, the system averaged a *Needs Improvement* rating of 81%

- Agencies varied in performance, with a range of 73%-88%
- One agency received a **Does Not Meet Expectations** rating
- One agency received a *Needs Improvement* rating
- Three agencies received a *Meets Expectations* rating

Figure 13. Participants Engaged in Employment by Agency
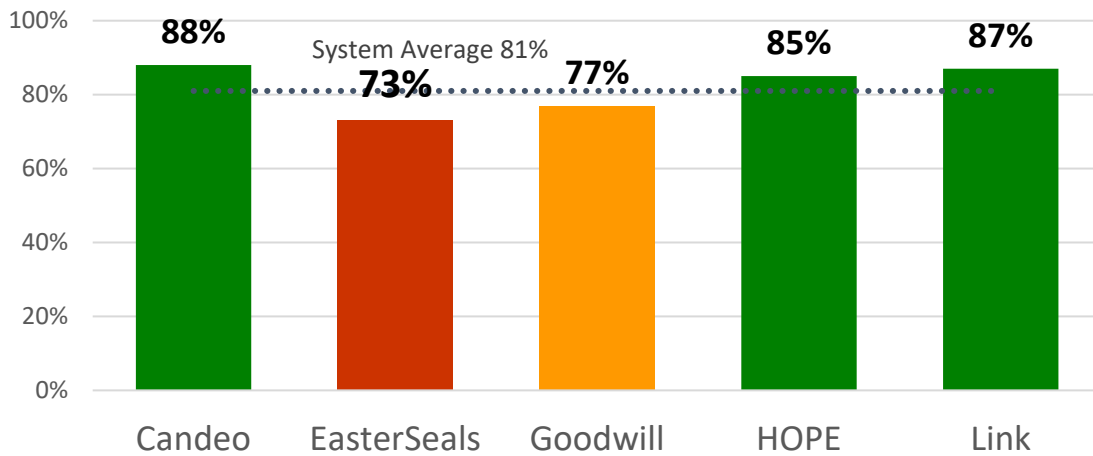
Compared to 2020, the overall system performance for the **Engaged in Employment** outcome **increased 13%**, from 71% to 84%, moving from the **Does Not Meet Minimum Expectations** category to *Needs Improvement* and maintaining that rating into 2022.

Figure 14. Participants Engaged in Employment 2018-2022

WORKING TOWARD SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Metric	The percentage of employable individuals working 20 hours or more per week[4] and earning the minimum wage or greater during the four weeks in two specified reporting periods (January 2022 and April 2022). Results are reported and scored for programs with ten or more employment eligible individuals.[1]
Intent	The number of program participants working at self-sufficiency during the year will increase. The intent is to increase people with disabilities' assets.
Rationale	Unemployment is a notable disparity experienced by many members of the disability community. Only 32% of Americans with disabilities aged 18 to 64 are working, but two-thirds of those unemployed would rather be working [source: The National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.)]. The Polk County MHDS Region recognizes that employment is not only a profound issue for the disability community, but also a key to self-sufficiency. The unemployment rate among individuals with severe mental health conditions is between 80 and 90%. The financial strain of unemployment tends to exacerbate poor mental health. Psychological distress also increases the risk of being unemployed, which impedes perceptions of self-sufficiency. Setting vocational goals for employment can be a key factor in mental health recovery.[2]

Performance Ratings	Exceeds Expectations 4 35%+	Meets Expectations 3 26-34%	Needs Improvement 2 17-25%	Does Not Meet Minimum Expectations 1 Less than 17%

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[4] Individuals working more than 20 hours per week, but not earn minimum wage as well as individuals working less than 20 hours per week and earning above minimum wage do not meet criterion.

Figure 15 represents the percent of employed participants at each evaluated agency considered to be **Working Toward Self-Sufficiency** (20 or more hours a week) in 2022.
- Two agencies *Exceeded Expectations*
- Three agencies *Need Improvement*

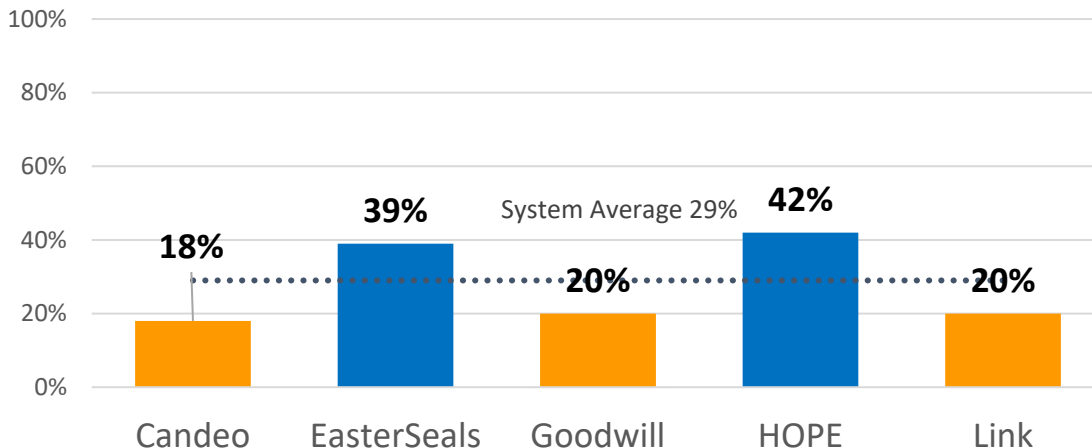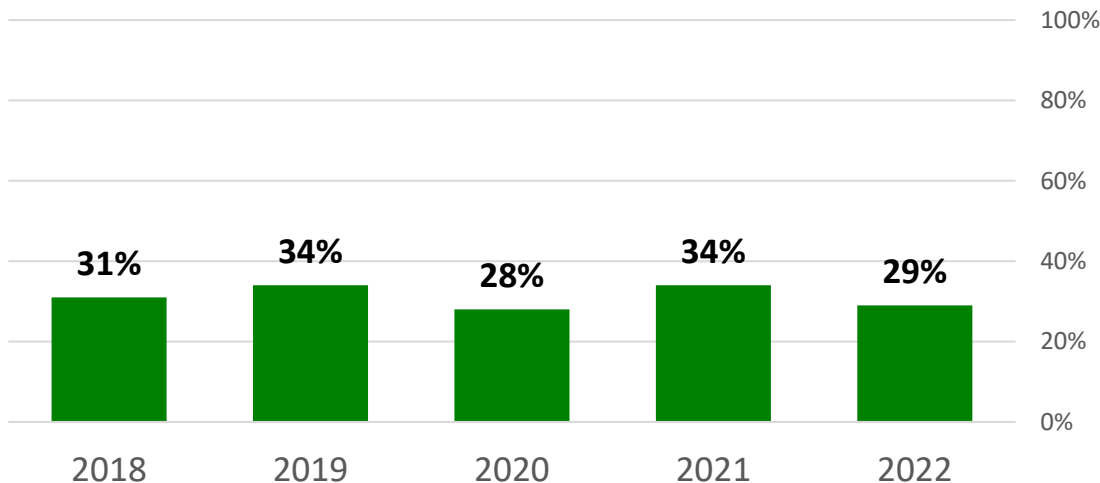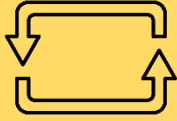**Figure 15. 2022 Working Toward Self-Sufficiency by Agency**

Figure 16 represents the system-level trends in **Working Towards Self-Sufficiency** from 2018 to 2022.

- There was slight variation between the levels of **Working Towards Self-Sufficiency** with a 2% difference between 2018 and 2022, and a range from 28% to 34%.

Figure 16. Working Toward Self- Sufficiency 2018-2022

NEGATIVE DISENROLLMENT

Metric	The percentage of program participants negatively disenrolled.
Intent	The organization will not negatively disenroll program participants. This outcome is for the agencies to develop trusting and meaningful relationships with their participants.
Rationale	Ensure continuity of care and avoid individuals with disabilities encountering barriers to accessing services because they are too difficult or expensive for the agency to assist. Service agencies report needing to provide services or a level of care that is not covered by state Medicaid benefits to address critical needs of clients, especially those with complex needs (NCQA).

Performance Ratings	Exceeds Expectations 4 0% - 0.99%	Meets Expectations 3 1% - 2.99%	Needs Improvement 2 3% - 3.99%	Does Not Meet Minimum Expectations 1 Above 4%

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[5] Disenrollment is the termination of services due to an individual leaving the program either on a voluntary or involuntary discharge. Negative disenrollments are defined as individual refuses to participate, the individual is displeased with services, the agency initiates discharge, or the individual is discharged to prison for greater than 6 months.

In 2022, all agencies *Exceeded Expectations* for the **Negative Disenrollment** Outcome.

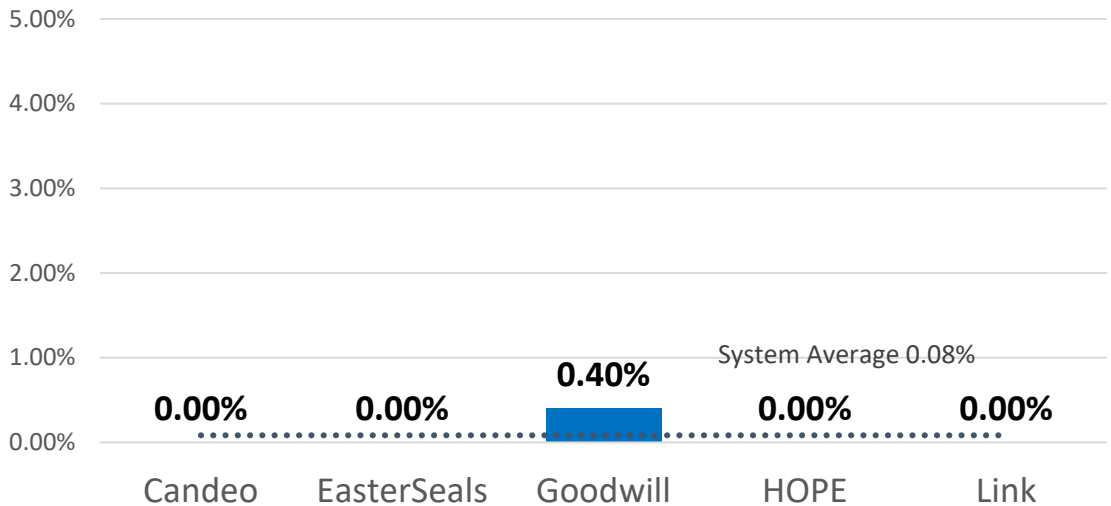**Figure 17. 2022 Negative Disenrollment Rates by Agency**

	Candeo	EasterSeals	Goodwill	HOPE	Link
	0.00%	0.00%	0.40%	0.00%	0.00%

System Average 0.08%

Figure 18. Negative Disenrollment Rates 2018–2022

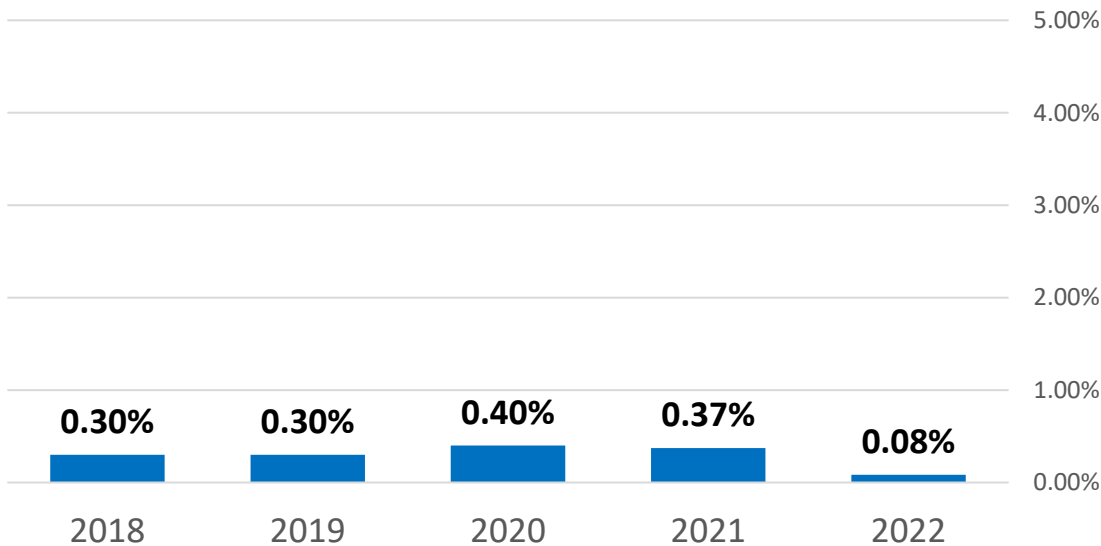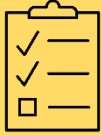| 2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
0.30%	0.30%	0.40%	0.37%	0.08%

Figure 23 represents the system-level trends in **Negative Disenrollment Rates** from 2018 to 2022.

- There was a 9% **decrease** in the level of **Negative Disenrollment** *Rates* from 2021 to 2022 after remaining stable in previous years.

FILE REVIEW

Purpose/Goal

Participants, stakeholders, and the Polk County MHDS Region rely on information reported by provider agencies. Provider agencies report the dates in which participants are enrolled in services, change services, or discontinue services. While participants are employed, provider agencies report the hours worked and wage rate earned for the two reporting periods in the year. The Polk County MHDS Region and stakeholders rely on this information to monitor the functioning of and response to the community-based employment needs of Polk County residents. Data inaccuracies affect the availability and funding of services for participants.

Accurate data are crucial for monitoring the functioning of and responding to the employment needs of Polk County residents. Data inaccuracies may result in reductions of availability and funding for services. Thus, accurate data is important not only for the Polk County MHDS Region and other stakeholders but also for participants. Provider agencies are encouraged to establish effective quality assurance practices, provide ongoing training for staff on best practices and expectations for documentation, and to seek technical assistance from Polk County MHDS Region to improve or sustain the accuracy of information.

Metric

This outcome is based on expectations of documentation of service criteria by staff and found in participants' files. There are two kinds of documentation: 1) the documentation of services delivered, such as dates services begin and end, monthly contact at minimum, and services matching the needs of the participant, and 2) documentation of wages and hours worked for the reporting weeks. These expectations criteria vary based on type of service provided (e.g., employment prep, job development, supported employment). The outcome is scored as the percentage of service expectations criteria documented in the file based on the number expected.

Methods

To monitor the accuracy of outcomes data reported by the providers, evaluators have conducted reviews of provider agencies' files with each evaluation and included those results in the annual reports. Six files from each provider were reviewed this year, stratified by service type. File review criteria are listed in Appendix C.
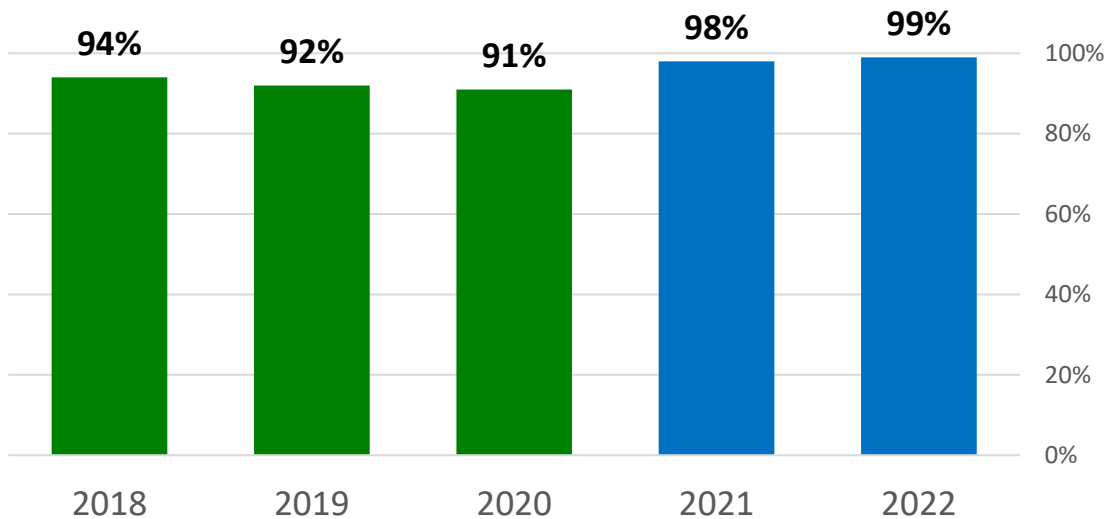
For the *File Review* outcome, all five agencies *Exceeded Expectations* in 2022.

Figure 19. 2022 File Review Accuracy by Agency
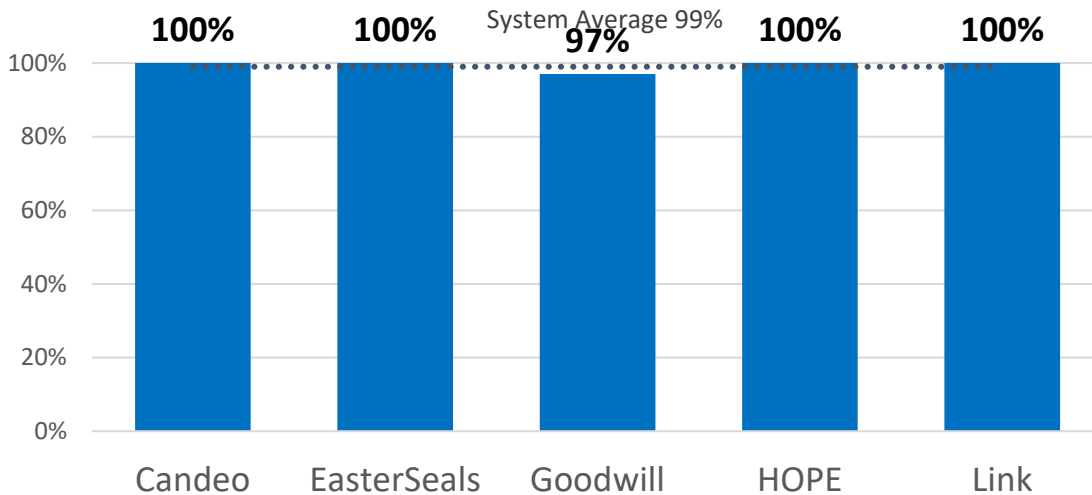
In 2022, the *System Average* (99%) earned the highest score in the *File Review* outcome amongst the previous 5 years, maintaining an *Exceeds Expectations* rating from 2021.

Figure 20. System File Review Accuracy 2018-2022
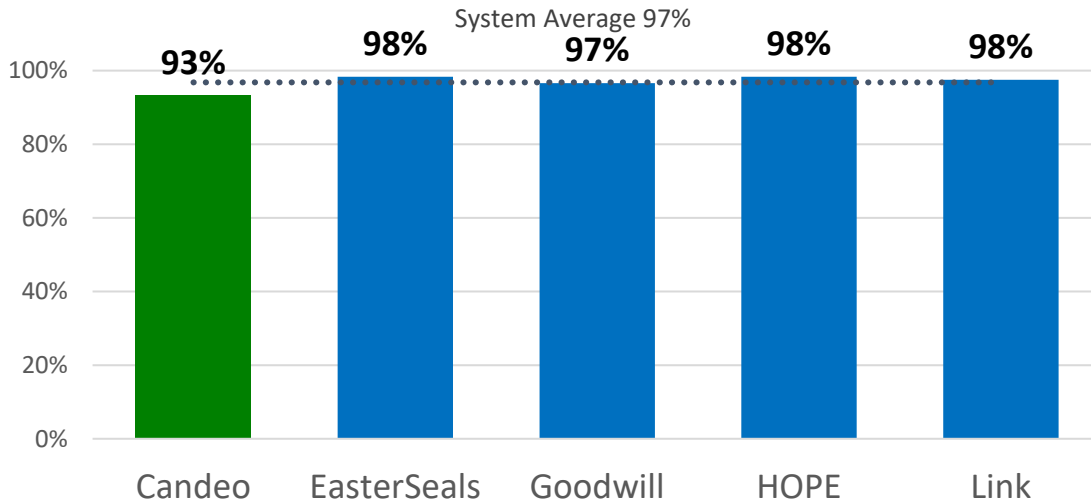
PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION

Metric	The percentage of program participants who reported satisfaction with services, including questions in the areas of access to services, staff support, empowerment, impact of services, suggestions for improvement, and unmet needs
Intent	Program participants will report satisfaction[6]. with the services that they receive. Program participants are the best judge of how services and supports are meeting their needs. Increasing literature finds that involving participants in the delivery or re-design of health care can lead to improved quality of life and enhanced quality and accountability of health services.[3]
Rationale	When asked, many people who have struggled with brain health or addiction voice that the most important part of their recovery was finding a support plan that worked with them as an individual and not just as part of a system. Strengths-based programs that are person-centered allow individuals to work toward recovery at their own pace and utilize resources that will help them improve (NAMI).

Performance Ratings	Exceeds Expectations 4 95% - 100%	Meets Expectations 3 90% - 94%	Needs Improvement 2 85% - 89%	Does Not Meet Minimum Expectations 1 Below 85%

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[6] Satisfaction is determined by the independent evaluator interviewing a 10% sample of program participants. A survey asking program participants questions regarding access, empowerment, and service satisfaction.

In 2022, one agency *Met* and four agencies *Exceeded Expectations* for the *Participant Satisfaction* outcome.

Figure 21. 2022 Participant Satisfaction by Agency

Over time, the system average for *Participant Satisfaction* remains high and stable. Over the past five years, the system has *Met Expectations* or *Exceeded Expectations*.

Figure 22. Participant Satisfaction 2018-2022 System Average
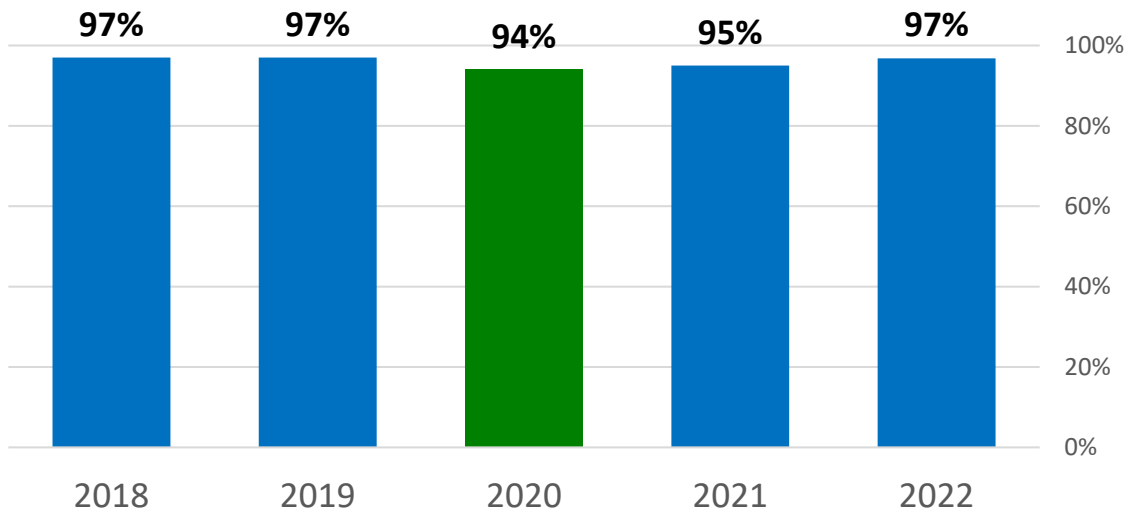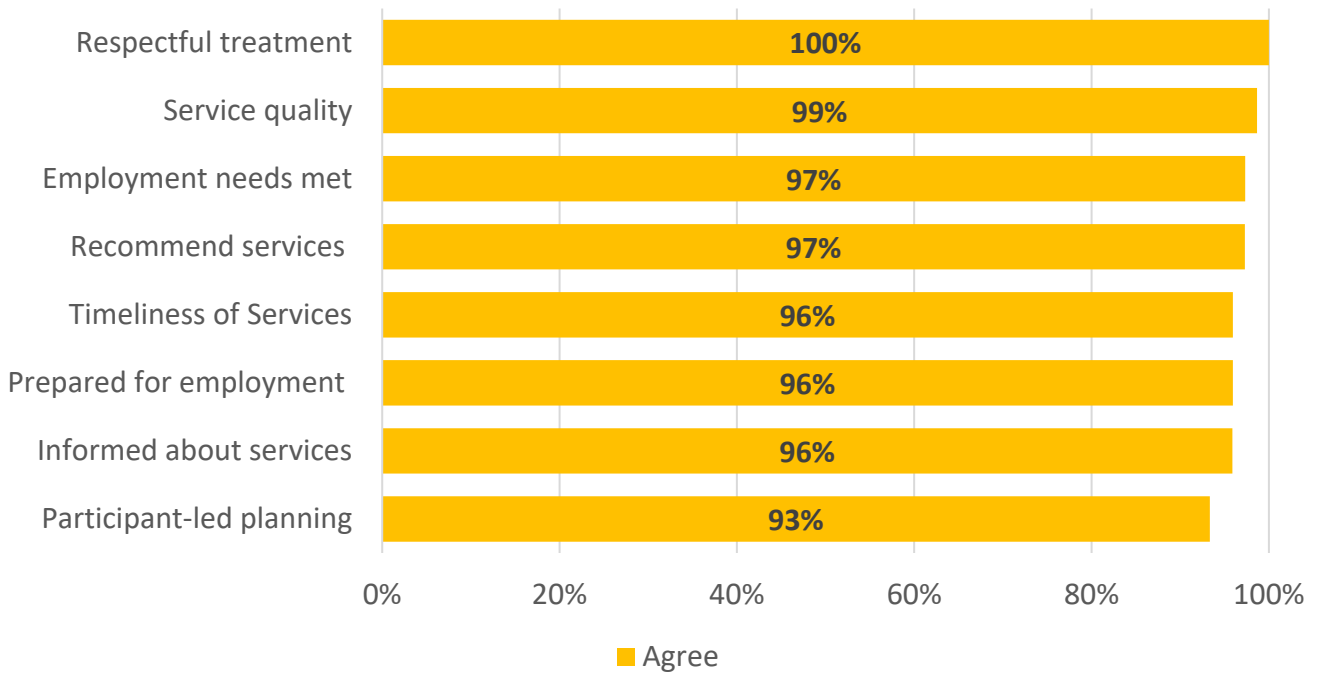

Figure 23 shows rates of agreement by item from the satisfaction survey. Rates of satisfaction were high overall, and, within the network, participants were most likely to report that:

- They were ***treated with respect*** and courtesy (100%),

- Staff *informed them about services* that were available and answered their questions (96%),
- That they were adequately *prepared for employment* (96%),
- That they *participated in the selection* of their employment and development of their employment plan (93%).

Figure 23. Participant Satisfaction System Average by item[7]

Item	Agree
Respectful treatment	100%
Service quality	99%
Employment needs met	97%
Recommend services	97%
Timeliness of Services	96%
Prepared for employment	96%
Informed about services	96%
Participant-led planning	93%

■ Agree

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[7] Full participant interview items listed in Appendix D

References

[1] A participant's status me be defined as "employment eligible" if that individual is under 65 years of age and has a LOCUS score of less than 5 or 6

[2] Hong et al., 2019

[3] Bombard et al., 2018