

2024 Case Manager of the Year Finalists (2)

Kerra Sandlin

Intake Case Manager, Mountain Valley Developmental Services: 10 years

As a parent

It wasn't a 911 call, but it might as well have been. It was the first time I talked with Kerra about more than the FSSP funds that had been approved. Our child, Henry, who has Down syndrome, was going off the rails. He was being violent and unsafe. I cried to Kerra on a number of occasions, and I trusted her instantly. It was the first time I had felt understood, and it was so relieving. This is who Kerra is. Along with her empathetic, compassionate ear, she went into action and found us several different options, all that were helpful. She helped us break a complicated process into manageable pieces and always, without a single waiver, kept Henry at the center of all her efforts. She has attended IEP meetings, played bad cop with the provider, kept me and my husband informed on every option that is presented. Now, Henry is living happily, and she continues to be in his life as his case manager. He loves her and so do my husband and me. Her case management is priceless, and I'm sure she provides the same to all of her other families.

As a colleague to a new hire

Two and a half years later, and after serving on the HRC committee for a year because Kerra asked me to and I was happy to give back, I joined the case management team and became Kerra's colleague. Kerra quickly demonstrated how much knowledge she holds and how it allows her to do her job expertly. She has effectively trained me in general intake/eligibility, FSSP, CES, and CHRP. Just like she has done as our case manager, she has done as a mentor. She takes every process apart, piece by piece, and facilitates the learning. Her coaching has allowed me to navigate a very complicated process with confidence. I now have clients in several different waivers and programs. She is an amazing reference guide. Any question I ask she has a response or a resource to provide. Additionally, she has been willing to help me at any time and takes time from her busy caseload to help me out. Somehow, she manages upwards of 100 cases, and each gets her individual attention. I know because I am one of those cases. My parent world and my work world have stitched together successfully, and it is, primarily, because of Kerra. Throughout all of this, she never swerves from her commitment to do the absolute best for each of her clients. Kerry deserves recognition for the quality of service she provides to families who are desperate for care and help.

Person-Centeredness: How does the nominee support people to establish and achieve their goals?

Kerra works with families to develop person-centered plans that look at the strengths and assets of an individual and long-term goals. Then, she works backwards to see what is necessary to reach those goals. She works with the individual first and then the individual facilitates the meeting, with Kerra as a coach.

Relationships: How does the nominee empower the individual(s) they support to create and maintain friendships and relationships beyond the person's family and staff?

Kerra looks at individuals in a holistic way, focusing on what they want and providing a myriad of options. She consistently finds activities that individuals can do to increase their community networks, whether it is joining a community level sports class or helping find employment. The individuals she works with experience an expanded world because of her case management style.

Relationships: How does the nominee help facilitate relationships that enable the individual to be included in the community?

Kerra, in every geographical location where she works with individuals, finds resources to support those individuals. For example, if an individual needs massage therapy, Kerra will

do her best to find a massage therapist in that location. The same is true with recreation, behavior therapy, and a multitude of other services. As far as inclusion, Kerra finds creative solutions that enable individuals to participate in community activities. If staff is necessary, she works with providers to get the staff.

Leadership: How has the nominee demonstrated personal or professional leadership?

Most recently, since the reorganization of case management agencies, our team, which used to be divided according to different waivers, is now needing to learn all of what Kerra knows and does. She is organizing ways to coach each of our team members, even our director, on the elements of, specifically, children's waivers, which Kerra has traditionally done on her own.

Leadership: How does the nominee stand out, even among other DSPs/CMs/Advocates from your organization?

Kerra proposes new ideas to better meet the needs of our families and individuals. For example, if a waiver has limits on the amount of funding for specific services, she will work to find additional, accessible funding that can help. Also, she is a team member who suggests practices that will improve efficiencies with case management.

Innovation: How does the nominee think "outside the box" to improve the quality of life of the person or people they support?

Kerra is a natural problem solver. In a recent example, an individual wanted to exercise more and access the community rec center. The provider said they did not have the staff to be able to accompany this individual. Access to the community is a priority for Kerra, so she found a creative solution. She worked with the provider to develop a staff schedule that would allow for an overlap of staffing for 90 minutes 3 days per week so that staff could cover all of the individuals and the one individual could join the community level classes. She does this kind of problem solving over and over again.

Linda Medina

Case Management Director, Envision: 27+ years

It is with immense pleasure that I nominate Linda Medina for Case Manager of the Year. Linda's dedication, expertise, and unwavering commitment to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities makes her an exceptional candidate for this recognition.

Linda's journey with Envision spans an impressive 27 years, and she worked with Eastern Services before that. These numbers of years of service are a testament to her passion for supporting individuals with IDD. Her career path reflects her versatility and growth mindset, starting in Residential Services, and then Children's Case Management including Early Intervention Services, before dedicating the last 15 years to mastering all facets of Case Management. This diverse experience grants her a unique understanding of the challenges and triumphs individuals and families face at different stages of their lives.

Linda's strengths shine brightly in her daily interactions with people and families supported. She is unfailingly helpful, going above and beyond to ensure their needs are met, from navigating complex systems, to providing emotional support, not to mention her amazing ability to resolve billing issues no matter the reason for denial. Her reliability is a cornerstone of trust, as people know they can count on her unwavering commitment and follow-through. Her knowledge is vast, encompassing not only program specifics but also a deep understanding of individual needs and community

resources. This holistic approach empowers people and families to make informed decisions and achieve their goals.

Even as the Case Management Director, Linda regularly carries a caseload to help out, is a pillar of support for her colleagues, and to both her direct and indirect reports. She readily shares her expertise, mentoring new Case Managers and fostering a collaborative team environment. Her positive attitude is infectious, creating a workplace where everyone feels valued and motivated.

Linda's impact extends beyond Envision's walls. She has actively participated in State-wide work groups, and local committees. She is a respected advocate in the community, actively participating in initiatives that improve the lives of individuals with IDD. Her dedication to people/families receiving services and seeking services is impressive, and she has been instrumental in Case Management Redesign, ensuring a smooth transition for everyone from Envision to Weld County on 3/1/2024. Linda's last day with Envision will be 2/29/2024, and I can't think of anyone more deserving of this recognition than Linda.

In conclusion, Linda Medina embodies the core values of Envision and Alliance. Her compassion, expertise, and dedication have touched the lives of countless individuals and made a lasting impact on our organization, and the community. I wholeheartedly nominate her for Case Manager of the Year, confident that she is a true inspiration to us all.

Person-Centeredness: How does the nominee support people to establish and achieve their goals?

Envision is a Person-Centered Organization and PCO Coach. She is a strong advocate for people making decisions for themselves.

Relationships: How does the nominee empower the individual(s) they support to create and maintain friendships and relationships beyond the person's family and staff?

She ensures that people know and understand their rights, and encourages people to advocate for themselves, especially related to their friendships and relationships.

Relationships: How does the nominee help facilitate relationships that enable the individual to be included in the community?

She asks questions to help people identify their likes and interests and is extremely knowledgeable about resources that can connect people to those interests.

Leadership: How has the nominee demonstrated personal or professional leadership?

Linda has helped in many different positions at multiple organizations and has demonstrated leadership in every position she has held. She primarily demonstrates leadership through her mentoring and encouraging of other staff.

Leadership: How does the nominee stand out, even among other DSPs/CMs/Advocates from your organization?

Linda challenges people to do more and do better. She believes that we all have a responsibility to ensure that people/families receive the support they need and deserve. She provides resources to staff to help them fulfill that responsibility.

Innovation: How does the nominee think “outside the box” to improve the quality of life of the person or people they support?

Linda does not take "no" for an answer. If somebody needs a supply or service that isn't covered in one of the programs, she actively researches other community resources to help people.