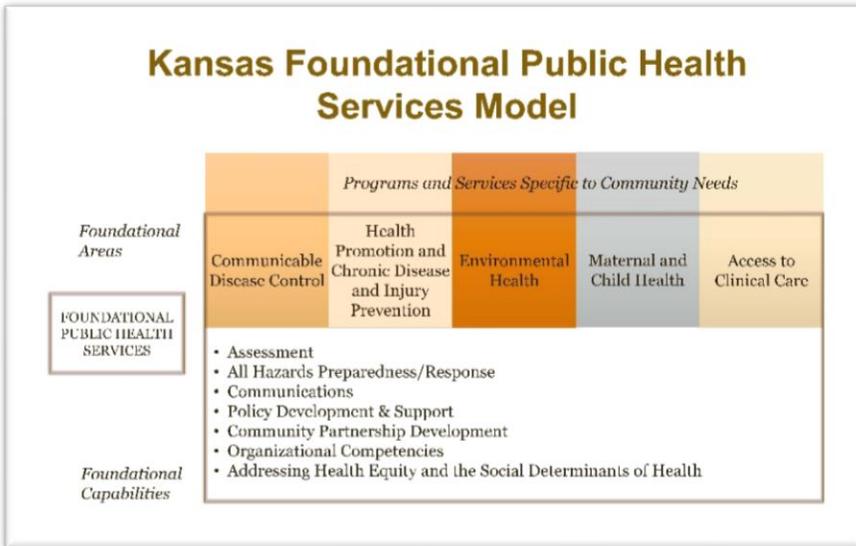


Kansas Association of Local Health Departments 2019 Policy Statement

Public Health in Kansas

The State of Kansas has a decentralized public health system consisting of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and 100 local health departments. Under Kansas law, local health departments report to their Boards of Health, which in most cases is comprised of the Board of County Commissioners.

Public health's primary function is to protect and promote the population's health through prevention, environmental protection, and public regulations and policies.¹ Population-based prevention efforts improve the health of Kansans more efficiently than clinical care alone. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "health care accounts for only 10% of health outcomes; the remaining 90% are influenced by a complex mix of determinants of health including behaviors, socioeconomic, and physical environments."²



KALHD's vision is a system of local health departments committed to helping all Kansans achieve optimal health by providing Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS). The FPHS model defines a core package of public health services that should be accessible to all Kansans regardless of the jurisdiction within which they live. The field of public health is evolving to focus on cross-sector collaboration and environmental, policy, and systems-level actions that directly affect the social determinants of health and health disparities.

KALHD is actively working with public health and other systems partners to develop options for policy changes to modernize the public health system in order to ensure the health and safety of all Kansans.

Policy Priorities

State Support for Local Public Health

The State of Kansas ranks near the bottom nationally for state support for local public health; a 2017 study conducted by Trust for America's Health ranks Kansas 44 for state support to public health in FY 2015-2016.³ State "Aid to Local" funding has remained level since 1995, while the cost for providing services has increased. We urge the governor and the legislature to increase funding for public health services to strengthen the public health system and protect the health of Kansans. Funding for public health should be enhanced and substantially modified. Funding should be identified to support core infrastructure and services as well as community-level work to address the social determinants of health.

Medicaid Expansion

We support expansion of the Kansas Medicaid program, which will complement counties' efforts in public health by bringing federal dollars to Kansas, provide vital revenues to our local providers, and reduce the number of uninsured Kansans.

Behavioral Health Services

Untreated mental illness, including substance use disorders, which former Surgeon General Vivek Murthy referred to as a "public health crisis," lead to chronic and long-term public health issues. We support restoration of state funding for both community-based and in-patient (both state and private psychiatric hospitals) crisis stabilization and treatment. We further support the strategies outlined in the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas's "Mental Health 2020 Initiative" to strengthen the Kansas mental health system.⁴

Opioid Epidemic

According to the CDC, "Drug overdose deaths continue to increase in the United States. From 1999 to 2016, more than 630,000 people have died from a drug overdose. In 2016, more than 63,600 people died from drug overdoses, making it the leading cause of injury-related death in the United States. Of those deaths, about 66% involved a prescription or illicit opioid." Local health departments play a critical role in responding to the opioid epidemic, and we support appropriate funding of efforts to respond to the opioid epidemic and to implement evidence-based policies and programs for the prevention and treatment of opioid use disorder and its related health consequences.⁵



The Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD) is a nonprofit association dedicated to strengthening local health departments for the purpose of improving and protecting the health of all Kansans. KALHD's membership consists of 94 of the 100 local health departments in Kansas. For additional information, please contact: Michelle Ponce, Executive Director, michelle.ponce@kalhd.org • 785-271-8391

Elimination or Reduction of Sales Tax on Food

The State of Kansas has the highest rate of sales tax on food in the nation, which negatively impacts people's health and economic activity. We support elimination or reduction of the state sales tax on food.⁶

Immunizations

According to the CDC, vaccinations are one of the ten great public health achievements of the 20th century. Vaccines have reduced or eliminated many diseases that once killed or seriously harmed infants, children, and adults. Kansas statute provides exemptions to required vaccinations based upon the child's health or family's religious convictions. The current statutory exemptions are sufficient, and we oppose increasing allowable exemptions, which leads to decreased vaccination rates and poses a significant risk to the health and well-being of Kansans.

Clean Air

The Kansas Clean Air Act is an effective public health strategy aimed at reducing the negative consequences of second-hand smoke exposure. Efforts to diminish the effectiveness of the law through exemptions provide no public benefit, and if implemented, would negatively impact the health of Kansans.

Tobacco 21

We support state-level legislation to raise the legal minimum age for sale of all tobacco and nicotine products to age 21. Twenty-two local governments in Kansas have already passed Tobacco 21 ordinances designed to decrease rates of youth tobacco use and to combat tobacco-related disease and the corresponding economic burden of health care costs directly attributable to tobacco use.⁷

Regulation of Electronic Cigarettes/Devices

The sale and use of electronic cigarettes/devices have increased substantially in the past decade. We support policies to regulate the sale, marketing, and use of e-cigarettes to protect the health of users, reduce youth initiation to nicotine and tobacco products, and promote enforcement of tobacco-free laws.⁸

Clean Water

Activities carried out by counties, including enforcement of local sanitation codes and ensuring proper wastewater and sewage disposal, are vital to ensuring a safe and clean water supply for Kansas families. State support for these services was eliminated when the Local Environmental Protection Program was defunded in 2012. In order to ensure protection of water quality across the state, we urge the governor and legislator to restore funding for these efforts.

Expand Access to Dental Care

As a member of the Kansas Dental Project, we support passage of the dental therapist legislation in order to increase access to quality, cost-effective dental care for Kansas families.

Community Fluoridation

We support preservation of community water fluoridation in Kansas. Community water fluoridation is proven to be a safe and effective way to reduce tooth decay.⁹

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Nutrition program

We support the priorities of the National WIC Association and support full funding of the WIC program in 2019; strengthening of the WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program; the continued transition of the WIC program to an electronic benefits service delivery model (eWIC); and fully funding of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) through the farm bill process as the SNAP program works in tandem with WIC and other programs to support low-income families to meet their nutrition needs and to combat hunger.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

According to the CDC, childhood experiences, both positive and negative, have a tremendous impact on future violence victimization and perpetration and lifelong health and opportunity. As such, early experiences are an important public health issue. We support funding and policies that support public health interventions to prevent or address ACEs (including training and support for trauma-informed care for public health practitioners) and, therefore, reduce or prevent the resultant wide-ranging health and social consequences.¹⁰

¹ CDC. (2012). *Public Health in the Age of Health Care Reform*. Atlanta, GA: Author

² Ibid.

³ Trust for America's Health. (2017). *A funding crisis for public health and safety: state-by-state health funding and key health facts 2017*. Retrieved from <https://www.tfah.org/report-details/a-funding-crisis-for-public-health-and-safety-state-by-state-public-health-funding-and-key-health-facts-2017/http://healthyamericans.org/assets/files/TFAH-2016-InvestInAmericaRpt-FINAL.pdf>

⁴ Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas. (2016). *Mental Health 2020 Press Release*. Retrieved from <http://www.acmhck.org/advocacy/public-policy>.

⁵ See also <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/states/index.html> and <https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/18-01-Opioid-Epidemic.pdf>.

⁶ kchealthykids. (2016). *Change Kansas Grocery Tax*. Retrieved from <https://www.kchealthykids.org/change-kansas-grocery-tax>.

⁷ Tobacco Twenty-One. (2018), *Kansas*. Retrieved from <https://tobacco21.org/state/kansas>.

⁸ For more information, see the Public Health Law Center at <http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/tobacco-control/e-cigarettes>. Additionally, please see the policy statement of the National Association of County & City Health Officials at <https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/96-04-Local-Tobacco-and-Vaping-Control-Regulations.pdf>. <http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/tobacco-control/e-cigarettes>. Additionally, please see the policy statement of the National Association of County & City Health Officials at <https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/96-04-Local-Tobacco-and-Vaping-Control-Regulations.pdf>.

⁹ CDC. *Fluoridation basics*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/basics/index.htm>.

¹⁰ See https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about_ace.html.