
**Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD)
2026 Policy Statement
Public Health in Kansas**

The environments where people live, learn, work, and play have a profound impact on health. Healthier individuals contribute more effectively to the workforce, strengthen families, improve communities, and shape the future of society. Public health professionals strive to implement policies that ensure access to nutritious food, safe housing, clean air and water, opportunities for physical activity, quality education, safe workplaces, and accessible healthcare for all Kansans.

Such policies can boost workforce productivity by reducing absenteeism and increasing people's ability to stay in the workforce as they age. They also help reduce healthcare costs for both private and public payers, promote financial independence, and decrease reliance on public resources. Ultimately, strengthening the economy, helping children to thrive, and enhancing the prosperity of every Kansan.

The Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD) hope to collaborate with like-minded leaders in business, government, philanthropy, advocacy, and individual citizens to encourage our elected officials to be purposeful in the adoption of policies that support public health.

The Kansas Association of Local Health Departments supports evidence-based and evidence-informed strategies to promote and protect public health and the environment.

Policy Priorities

Financial Support for Local Public Health

Recent reductions in federal support for core public health programs are projected to leave significant gaps in services that local governments cannot absorb without making difficult trade-offs. These federal funds have long supported immunizations, emergency preparedness, food assistance, disease control, and local health services across Kansas.

Local health departments have historically operated through a shared funding model that includes federal, state, and local contributions. In the face of reduced federal support, without additional investment at the state level, counties may be forced to reduce or eliminate essential services, placing added strain on families, communities, and businesses.

A consistent and dependable public health infrastructure in every Kansas county will require increased support at the state level. Strategic investment now can help preserve essential services and ensure that communities remain resilient in the face of future challenges.

Restore Funding for Laboratory Courier Services

Beginning July 1, 2025, previously missed opportunities to fund the basic infrastructure of the laboratory courier with state general funds in favor of temporary federal funding sources have reduced access to the laboratory services provided by the Kansas Health & Environment Laboratory (KHEL). Currently, just 42 of 105 counties have courier services and the remaining federal funds cannot be relied upon to continue services in those counties.

Data provided by KDHE shows that KHEL received 154,196 samples last year of which 81,510 were shipped using the laboratory courier. The courier provides access to laboratory services for hospitals (37,736 samples), environmental testing (23,301 samples) and local health departments (20,633 samples). In SFY2025 the cost of courier services was \$1,864,754.

Restoration of the courier on a statewide basis is essential for timely delivery of biological and water samples to KHEL. Without it, citizens face delays, increased costs, and limited availability of newborn screening of infants to identify rare or hidden disorders, testing of public water supplies to ensure safe drinking water, and the ability to identify, detect, and respond to threats to public health.

Infectious and Communicable Disease

Immunizations are among the most effective and cost-saving public health interventions. Over the past 30 years, routine childhood immunizations in the U.S. have prevented an estimated 500 million illnesses, 32 million hospitalizations, and 1.1 million deaths. These efforts have saved \$540 billion in direct medical costs and \$2.7 trillion in societal costsⁱ.

Kansas communities rely on immunization programs to protect families, farmers, and small businesses from preventable diseases. National organizations including the American Medical Association, American Academy of Nursing, and National Foundation for Infectious Diseases continue to affirm the safety and effectiveness of immunizations and urge policymakers to preserve science-based immunization policies.

We support continued investment in immunization programs and transparent, evidence-based policy processes because immunizations protect lives, reduce healthcare costs, and strengthen Kansas's public health infrastructure.

ⁱ [American Academy of Nursing \(2024 Statement on Vaccine Impact\)](#)