



KHA's Capitol Comments
Sept. 10, 2021

SPARK Task Force Reviews Proposal

This afternoon the SPARK Executive Committee met to discuss further the proposal to get funds to front line health care workers. The committee discussion centered on outlining and further defining the program parameters.

The committee discussed a proposal developed by the private sector sub-committee members. The proposal sets in motion the availability of \$50 million for a hospital employee retention plan. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment will administer the program, and the Kansas Hospital Association will continue to work with the SPARK committee and agencies as details become available regarding the distribution timeline for the funds.

Who Qualifies?

Any hospitals having an emergency department and defined as a general hospital or critical access hospital under KSA 65-425.

How will they define how much funding is available?

Distribution of funds will be calculated by licensed non-ICU beds divided by six, and ICU beds divided by two. This amount will be divided by the total number of front line nursing resources in the state. The funding would follow beds, even if they are leased beds.

Program Administration

KDHE is to advance funding to the facilities, and 1 percent of total program dollars will go to KDHE for the program's administration.

What can the funds be used for?

The funds can be used as a premium pay program as defined in the American Rescue Plan Act or facilities can design their own retention program as defined by the qualified facility. The Kansas Office of Recovery should review any custom program to ensure they are in compliance with federal expenditure guidelines.

Money can be used for front line staff and nurses, those who have retired, and new nurses.

Funding is limited to \$13 per hour of work by a particular employee for hours worked after Sept. 1, 2021. Expenditures would need to be for pay or other retention benefits but must be spent by Feb. 28, 2022.

Reporting

The program will require monthly reporting to KDHE and the SPARK Committee on current COVID-related employee policies and employee turnover data for the months of June, July, August, September, and going forward, with the first report being due by Oct. 31st and each month after that.

Other items that the committee discussed included encouraging hospitals to reach out to local government units to explore funding cost sharing. Expanding nursing education capacity in Kansas was also brought up as a future need.

As more details become available, we will keep you posted. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Thank you to all of you that have been assisting in these efforts. We hope that you will consider sending your thanks to the SPARK Committee members as well.