



***KHA's Current Report***  
**October 25, 2024**

**President's Perspective – Improving Behavioral Health Services in Kansas**

Behavioral health continues to be a challenging issue for Kansas hospitals. Even with interventions such as an increase in state and federal investments in certified community behavioral health clinics, crisis intervention centers and the 988 program, hospitals find themselves holding behavioral health patients in their emergency departments waiting for state hospital beds. One positive movement in this area occurred two years ago when the Kansas Hospital Association was able to secure state funding for patients in hospitals awaiting state hospital beds through the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services. You can learn more about this funding on [our website](#).

It is important to note that Kansas hospitals aren't facing behavioral health challenges in Kansas alone. Law enforcement, community mental health centers, addiction treatment centers and the Governor's Behavioral Health Service Planning Council are working to improve behavioral health services in Kansas. KHA's Behavioral Health Committee regularly convenes representatives of these groups to discuss challenges and find ways to collaborate on solutions. The committee met this week, and one of the state's two crisis intervention centers reported they are beginning to see a reduction in the number of persons in mental health crisis ending up in hospital emergency rooms or the custody of law enforcement. With the crisis intervention center regulations finalized in late 2023, we hope to see more reductions across the state.

KHA's Behavioral Health Committee also heard from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment on its pilot bio-surveillance initiative to collect data for use in developing prevention activities by the state and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The program would work with hospitals to submit urine specimens from ER patients with suspected drug overdoses to the Kansas Health and Environmental Laboratories to test for a broader range of substances than the hospital lab. The program would be free to hospitals, and hospitals would be compensated for staff time needed to participate. Interested hospitals can contact KDHE at [kdhe.odprevention@ks.gov](mailto:kdhe.odprevention@ks.gov).

Last month, the final rules for the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act were published at the federal level. The Act was initially passed in 2008, with the first round of regulations finalized in 2013. The Act ensures individuals don't face more restrictive limitations or requirements when accessing behavioral health services than medical/surgical services. The new rules improve access to care by requiring insurers to perform and document comparative analysis of their coverage to ensure compliance with the Act. In addition, the final rules strengthen the definitions of mental health and substance abuse treatment, which helps eliminate loopholes in compliance for insurers. You can learn more about the final rule in detail [here](#).

Kansas hospitals know much work is still needed to enhance the care and treatment for persons with behavioral health conditions, including those with substance use disorders. KHA will continue to work with our members and stakeholders across the state to improve behavioral health services in Kansas.

--Chad Austin

### **2024 Excellence in Workforce Strategies Award Winner**

Strategies that address workforce recruitment and retention are essential to providing optimal health in Kansas. The [Workforce Strategies Award](#) recognizes a team of employees, providers or volunteers who have significantly contributed to the well-being, retention or recruitment of health care workers at their facility.

Phillips County Health Systems' Employee Engagement and Wellness Committee is this year's winner. If you have not seen the video highlighting their teamwork on workforce retention and recruitment strategies, I encourage you to watch it.



Over the next few months, the Kansas Hospital Association will highlight all the nominees for the Workforce Strategies Award and feature best practices on recruitment and retention on the KHA website. The Employee Engagement and Wellness Committee from Phillips County Health Systems in Phillipsburg kicked off the series.

The Employee Engagement and Wellness Committee at Phillips County Health Systems exemplifies extraordinary leadership and dedication to staff well-being and retention. By implementing innovative programs and creating a supportive work environment, the committee has drastically reduced staff turnover from 4-6 percent per month in 2023 to under 1 percent in 2024, achieving several months with 0 percent turnover.

Initiatives, such as the HOSA program, Employee Wellness Program and mentorship program, showcase their commitment to attracting and retaining quality health care professionals. The committee's proactive approach and unwavering support for employees set a high standard for other teams, making them a true role model.

The committee demonstrates compassion and empathy by recognizing and celebrating employees' milestones such as birthdays, retirements and other significant events. Their Employee Wellness Program includes free access to the local gym, nutrition seminars and other activities to promote physical and mental well-being. These efforts show a deep respect for employees' health and happiness. The committee also fosters an inclusive and supportive environment by organizing family-friendly events like the Fall Fest, which features bouncy houses, s'mores and activities for employees and their families. Their initiatives promote cooperation and collaboration, enhancing team unity and creating a positive workplace culture.

The committee launched several key initiatives to address staff turnover and improve employee engagement:

- HOSA Program: Partnered with the local high school to introduce students to health care careers through hands-on activities and mentorship, fostering future talent.
- Employee Wellness Program: Implemented quarterly wellness challenges with prizes, gym introduction tours with free gym memberships, nutrition seminars and other health-promoting activities.
- Mentorship Program: Paired seasoned employees with new hires to provide guidance, support and foster professional growth.
- Annual and Additional Celebrations: Organized events like the yearly Hospital Week celebrations, Daisy Award Ceremony, Years of Service Banquet and the new Fall Fest, which featured activities for employees and their families to enhance team bonding.
- Apprenticeship Program: Facilitated the first apprenticeship through the TalentGro program, with additional apprenticeships in the pipeline, providing structured training, career development opportunities and funding.
- Relocation and Retention Incentives: Partnered with the local Economic Development Center to offer relocation incentives, ROZ program information and retention incentives for recruits.
- Student Loan Repayment Program: Designed a robust student loan repayment program through grants from two foundations, making the hospital more competitive for recent graduates.

These initiatives have created a more stable, motivated and engaged workforce. The committee identified vital issues such as high staff turnover and employee well-being through regular feedback and data analysis. By engaging in shared decision-making and collaboration, the team developed targeted initiatives to address these challenges. The team comprises dedicated members from various departments within the hospital, each bringing unique skills and perspectives. They held regular meetings to discuss progress, gather input and make adjustments as needed, ensuring all team members and stakeholders were involved in the decision-making process. Open communication was fostered through transparent updates and inclusive discussions, allowing diverse perspectives and innovative solutions. This collaborative and communicative approach has been instrumental in their strategies' successful implementation and positive impact, creating a cohesive and effective team dynamic.

Congratulations to Phillips County Health Systems' Employee Engagement and Wellness Committee. This feature is the first in a series of articles highlighting best practices on retention and recruitment strategies.

--Cindy Samuelson

### **Hotel Deadline Fast Approaching for the Rural Health Symposium – Nov. 21**

Rural health care providers constantly face new challenges and fewer resources. This symposium aims to provide attendees with the skills, ideas and information necessary to survive in the rapidly changing world of rural health care.

#### **Target Audience**

This symposium is designed for senior-level administrators, hospital trustees and others interested in rural health issues.

#### **Location and Hotel Accommodations**

This conference will be at the [DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Wichita Airport](#), 2098 Airport Road, Wichita, KS 67209. A block of rooms has been reserved for the night of Nov. 20 at the rate of \$115, plus tax. The hotel room block is available until Nov. 3. After that, reservations will be taken on a space-available basis. Make your reservation by calling (316) 945-5272 and provide the group name of the Kansas Hospital Association.



--Hayley Finch-Genschorck

### **Micro-Internship Opportunity**

The Kansas Board of Regents has partnered with the Kansas Hospital Association to launch the Kansas Health Care Micro-Internship Project. This grant-funded project allows students currently enrolled in any Kansas public community or technical college, and high school students at least 18 years old and completing one or more dual or concurrent enrollment courses, to apply to KHA for a "micro-internship." The student will complete various objectives and work with a local health care organization to interview someone working in health care. Next, they will create a social media post or PowerPoint to promote awareness of health care careers.

Kansas Health Care Micro-Internships are short-term, paid assignments designed to increase student awareness of the rewarding health care career opportunities available throughout the state, including the new apprenticeship programs initiated by the [Kansas Department of Commerce](#) and facilitated by the [Kansas Hospital Association](#). These KMI projects also benefit health care providers who want to increase their talent pipeline.

Students must complete the online [Agile Work Profiler](#), six short online [Skillsline micro-lessons](#) and an informational interview with a KHA member who will share a current challenge in their organization or facility. Students can then research and prepare a brief PowerPoint presentation or social media posts on how health care professionals address that challenge. The final requirement will be completing a short reflection essay on how the KMI project has influenced their consideration of a health care career.

Students will be provided sample questions to ask during the interview along with a PowerPoint or social media template to help guide their projects, which they can showcase to future employers. KHA will also offer other potential KMI projects that provide additional exposure to different health care pathways that can also benefit Kansas health care providers.

This KMI project is estimated to take 20 hours, and the student will be paid \$360. Please contact Jaron Caffrey if you have any questions or receive inquiries regarding a micro-internship without being connected through KHA.

*--Jaron Caffrey*

### **Register Now for the Rural Health Association Webinar – Oct. 31**

The Kansas Rural Health Association is hosting a [webinar](#) with Jessica Gnad and Dr. Elaine Johannes of Kansas State University from noon to 1:00 p.m. on Oct. 31.

Gnad is the director of the K-State 105 initiative. Dr. Johannes is an extension specialist and the Kansas Health Foundation distinguished professor in community health. They will share how K-State 105 and Extension are working to improve rural health in Kansas and make broader positive impacts on the state.

We're pleased to have the federal Health Resources and Services Administration's support in running the second educational webinar. Please feel free to share this with others in your networks who may be interested in K-State 105, K-State Extension and the KSRHA mission.

*--Tara Mays*

### **Registration Now Open: Physician Forum – Nov. 7**

The Physician Forum, cosponsored by the Kansas Medical Society and the Kansas Hospital Association, convenes Kansas physicians to foster discussion regarding critical issues impacting health and health care in Kansas. The webinar on Nov. 7 will focus on how artificial intelligence systems in health care transform how we communicate, collaborate and generate revenue. To capitalize on this revolution, hospitals and physicians must rethink their data systems and readiness, clinician training, engagement and ethical frameworks. Gurpreet Dhaliwal, MD, will address these topics and ask what happens when AI makes us stronger and faster.



--Jennifer Findley

### **CMS Final Rule Establishes Medicare Appeals Process for Eligible Inpatients Reclassified as Outpatients During Hospital Stay**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services released a final rule establishing appeals processes for certain people with Traditional Medicare who are initially admitted to a hospital as an inpatient but are subsequently reclassified as outpatients receiving observation services during their hospital stay and meeting other eligibility criteria. This final rule implements a federal court order (*Alexander v. Azar*) that directed CMS to establish this appeals process. Details can be found in this [fact sheet](#).

--Shannan Flach

### **Annual Kansas Rural Health Association Meeting – Nov. 20**

There is still time to register for the [2024 Annual Kansas Rural Health Association Annual Conference](#) from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Nov. 20, McPherson College, Mingenback Theater in McPherson.

Highlights of the meeting include:

- Morning sessions on rural health workforce resources
- Keynote from the Kansas Leadership Center
- Interactive afternoon session on integrated behavioral health
- Three afternoon breakout session options: two panels and one trip to tour a nearby Rural Emergency Hospital

KSRHA is also hosting a post-meeting social, including appetizers, from 4:00 to 6:30 p.m. at The HUB in Moundridge. If your organization is interested in sponsoring, please contact Brooklyne Horton, the board member handling sponsorships, at [bhorton@beam.healthcare](mailto:bhorton@beam.healthcare).

KSRHA serves Kansas through interdisciplinary collaboration to provide innovative ways to promote healthy rural communities to survive and thrive in the future through education and advocacy.

--Tara Mays

### **Grant Writing Basics: Budgeting Essentials Webinar – Nov. 1**

Grants can be a great way to start and/or maintain non-reimbursable programs, but the application process can sometimes feel overwhelming. The project budget is an integral part of a grant proposal.

Join us for a webinar at noon on Nov. 1 to discuss the essentials of a good budget. Topics include:

- The importance of budgeting
- Key components of a grant budget
- Compelling budget narratives
- Tools and resources for effective budgeting

We encourage hospital CEOs, CFOs and other hospital leaders interested in grant funding to participate in this webinar.



--Jennifer Findley

### **Funding Opportunity – Partnering to Advance Health Outcomes through Innovation and Collaboration**

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment and KU Medical Center are offering a new funding opportunity called PartnerSHIP: Partnering to Advance Health Outcomes through Innovation and Collaboration. The funding is available through the Healthy Kansans 2030 State Health Improvement Plan, developed by KDHE through a planning effort involving diverse stakeholders across Kansas.

The four priorities for 2023-2027 are:

- Address inequalities that improve health outcomes.
- Develop collaborative systems that increase healthcare access and delivery.
- Ensure access to health information that empowers communities to improve their quality of life.

- Expand systems of funding and support that allow the public health system and its collaborative partners to improve health.

To support local innovation and action, grants of up to \$37,000 are being offered to organizations interested in engaging in partnerships and activities to advance these priorities. Organizations interested in applying for this grant should identify as a 501(c)3 nonprofit and be connected to a coalition or collaborative with representation from multiple partners. Applicants from a coalition or organization without 501(c)3 status, but using a 501(c)3 fiscal sponsor, will be considered. Organizations based in rural or frontier communities are especially encouraged to apply. There is an interested applicant webinar on Nov. 12. The grant applications are due at midnight on Dec. 1.

You can find more information on the [KUMC website](#).

--Karen Braman

### **Health Observances and Recognition Days for November Month-Long Observances**

- Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month (National)
- American Diabetes Month
- Bladder Health Awareness Month
- COPD Awareness Month
- Diabetic Eye Disease Month
- Diabetes Month (National)
- Epilepsy Awareness Month (National)
- Family Caregivers Month (National)
- Healthy Skin Month (National)
- Hospice and Palliative Care Month (National)
- Lung Cancer Awareness Month
- Marrow Awareness Month (National)
- Movember
- Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month
- Prematurity Awareness Month
- Sexual Health Month (National)
- Stomach Cancer Awareness Month

### **Week-Long Observances**

- Nov. 3-9: Diabetes Education Week (National), Radiologic Technology Week (National) and Patient Transport Week (National)
- Nov. 10-16: Nurse Practitioner Week (National)
- Nov. 24-30: Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease Awareness Week



## Recognition Days | Events

- Nov. 8: Day of Radiography (International)
- Nov. 9: Diabetes Heart Connection Day (National)
- Nov. 10: Keratoconus Day (World)
- Nov. 12: Pneumonia Day (World)
- Nov. 14: Diabetes Day (World)
- Nov. 17: Prematurity Day (World)
- Nov. 18-24: U.S. Antibiotic Awareness Week
- Nov. 19-25: GERD Awareness Week
- Nov. 20: COPD Awareness Day (World)
- Nov. 21: Great American Smokeout, Family Health History Day (National), Rural Health Day (National) and Pancreatic Cancer Day (World)
- Nov. 23: Survivors of Suicide Loss Day (International)
- Nov. 25: Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (International)
- Nov. 28: Family Health History Day (National)

The Kansas Hospital Association and Society for Healthcare Strategy and Market Development are pleased to bring you the [2025 Calendar of Health Observances & Recognition Days](#). Yet another example of our commitment to providing health care strategists with practical, timely resources. This calendar is designed to help you plan your 2025 community health events, internal and external communications, social media campaigns and more. The 2025 calendar is easy to navigate, interactive and features more than 230 health observances and recognition days. Don't miss out on receiving calendar updates from SHSMD sponsor Baldwin Publishing. Not only do they provide you with a Health Observance Guide with ALL the content you need to post every day for the following month, they also give access to healthy recipes, cooking videos, branded cookbooks, recipe calendars, wellness content and solutions.

Access the 2024 Calendar of Health Observances & Recognition Days to help you plan for the remainder of the year.

[Download the 2024 Calendar](#)

*--Jan Fenwick*

## Federal and National News

### Blue Cross Blue Shield Agrees to \$2.8 Billion Settlement in Antitrust Case

Blue Cross Blue Shield agreed to a [settlement](#) to resolve an antitrust class action lawsuit brought by hospital systems and clinicians. The settlement includes a \$2.8 billion cash payment into a settlement fund. As part of the settlement, BCBS plans will implement 16 categories of transformational programming requirements, including timely communication and payment, transparent decision-making, and timely claims status updates.

### ***MLN Connects Provider eNews Available***

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services issued the following updates to MLN Connects Provider eNews:

- [CMS Roundup \(Oct. 18, 2024\)](#)
- [Rural Health Clinic & Federally Qualified Health Center: Final CY 2024 Payment Policies](#)

### **Before You Go ...**

An industrial chemical, BTMPS, used in plastic products for protection against ultraviolet rays has been cropping up in illegal drugs — a trend that is concerning health researchers. People who use drugs have said that BTMPS can smell like bug spray or plastic, and they have reported blurred vision, nausea and coughing after ingesting it. [Learn more.](#)