



***KHA's Current Report***  
**November 22, 2024**

**President's Perspective – Our Strategic Aim is Advancing Health in Kansas**

A few years ago, during the development of the Kansas Hospital Association's strategic plan, the KHA Board of Directors added a new element ... a Strategic Aim. The aim to "improve Kansas' statewide health ranking with a focus on preventive health services" was implemented in 2022. I want to use today's column to summarize KHA's work and outcomes related to the strategic aim over the last several years.

The strategic aim provides our association an opportunity to focus on the declining health status in Kansas during the last 30 years and rally KHA members and partners to work together to improve the overall health of Kansans. After reaching a high of eighth in the nation in 1991, Kansas declined more than any other state throughout the next 30 years to a low of 31st in health in 2022. We were pleased to see Kansas' health ranking improved from 31st in 2022 to 29th in 2023.

Through the strategic aim, KHA focused on preventive services hospitals provide to improve the health of their patients and communities while also providing opportunities to support population health and efforts to reduce disparities in care. One result of these efforts has been increased attention on Kansas' health ranking by the Kansas Health Foundation. Last year, KHF announced its organization's new strategic framework, which includes leading the nation in health. In their [announcement](#), KHF emphasized that Kansas' current health ranking of 29th nationally is unacceptable, and the drive to rank first will motivate and inform all of KHF's work.

KHA has directed our efforts to various cross-functional areas that support KHA's strategic aim, including data, advocacy, communications and education. This work has centered on providing tools to help our members as they work to improve the health of Kansans, increase preventive services rates, education and resources for population health and health equity-related work, and advocacy for appropriate reimbursement to hospitals for the provision of preventive services and addressing social determinants of health.

Essential data tools and resources to support health improvement work include KHA's benchmarking tool, [QHI](#), Advantage Optics and [Kansas Health Matters](#). In QHI, KHA added measures to support the [Fourth Trimester Initiative](#), which aimed to improve maternal health outcomes in Kansas. 42 Kansas birthing hospitals, representing more than 90 percent of births in Kansas, participated in the Fourth Trimester Initiative.

KHA staff also collaborated with our partners at the Kansas Healthcare Collaborative to develop quality and safety reporting stratified by race and ethnicity to help hospitals identify disparities in care. Another vital collaboration with KHC related to using data to identify disparities in care is a pilot of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality prevention and quality measures for emergency departments.

County health rankings are another critical way to trend health status in Kansas. KHA has partnered with the Kansas Health Institute to promote KHI's [County Health Profiles](#) through launch events in partnership with Kansas hospital sites. KHA and Healthworks, through the Kansas Rural Hospitals Optimizing Performance program, partnered with KHI in 2023 to conduct an updated population health survey and published a [population health issue brief](#) on survey findings.

The Healthy Kansas Hospitals program, supported through Healthworks, provides site visits and consultation regarding employee health and wellness. KHA's Optimal Health Committee also supports these efforts by providing guidance and input on hospital policies and practices to encourage healthy lifestyles for hospital employees, patients and visitors; making statewide policy and strategy recommendations to improve the health of all Kansans; and developing resources and education to assist hospitals with improving the health of the communities they serve.

KHA's Walk With A Doc initiative, funded by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas Blue Health Initiatives, had 21 hospitals create Walk with Doc chapters and host 206 walk events, with 4,137 participants. With the remaining grant funds, KHA requested and received approval to build a further mini-grant program to support KHA member hospitals. The mini-grant program was launched in July 2024, and in two weeks, 21 grants were successfully awarded to KHA member hospitals in support of health improvement work.

Another extensive effort aligned with the strategic aim was the three-year Immunization Enhancement grant work KHA has completed through a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/Kansas Department of Health and Environment grant. The grant was focused on increasing immunizations throughout the lifespan. KHA collaborated with the Kansas Academy of Family Physicians and the Kansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics to form the [Be Immune Kansas](#) partnership and resources. Additionally, KHA partnered with the [Immunize Kansas Coalition](#) to sponsor two [Vaccination Community Navigator Program](#) trainings this past spring and purchased 500 copies of each of the English and Spanish translations of the reference guide [Vaccine Fears Overturned by Facts](#).

Much progress has been made in the Kansas health rankings over the last three years. Many other Kansas stakeholders are now engaged in partnerships to improve Kansas' health status and outcomes, notably the state of Kansas through the Healthy Kansas 2030 efforts and the Kansas Health Foundation. This has made leading the nation in health one of their primary focus areas. KHA will continue to advocate for and provide resources and tools for Kansas hospitals as we work toward optimal health for Kansas. Thank you for your partnership in this journey!

--Chad Austin

### **Legislative Dinners Begin**

The Kansas Hospital Association has begun our annual legislative dinners this month and will continue into December. These dinners are designed for hospital leadership, staff and board members to speak with our elected officials and their staff about issues of importance. We hope you will use this opportunity to engage with policymakers while KHA is in your area. Below are upcoming opportunities for our hospitals to participate:

- Dec. 2 Kansas City
- Dec. 3 Garden City
- Dec. 5 Salina
- Dec. 9 Wichita
- Dec. 10 Topeka
- Dec. 12 Pittsburg

[Click to Register](#)

--Tara Mays

### **Compensation Strategies in Health Care: Trends, Insights and Future Planning – Dec. 11**

Understanding compensation and benefits strategies is more critical than ever in today's rapidly evolving health care landscape. Join KHA for an educational webinar from noon to 1:00 p.m. on Dec. 11, when Gallagher Surveys will provide valuable insights into the compensation trends affecting hospitals and health care organizations.

Speakers:

- Thomas Cummins, Senior Consultant, Gallagher Surveys
- Tom Wardrip, Consultant, Gallagher Surveys

Who Should Attend:

This webinar is tailored for human resource leaders, hospital administrators, and anyone interested in understanding and improving compensation strategies within the hospital setting.



--Hayley Finch Genschorck

### **The KHA-PAC Has Extra Reason to Be Thankful This Year – YOU DID IT!**

The Kansas Hospital Association Political Action Committee has an extra reason to be thankful this year. We reached our two-year \$168,000 fundraising goal ahead of Thanksgiving. As our KHA staff goes around the Thanksgiving table this year, we will be saying a special "THANKS" for all of the support of our member hospitals who made this audacious goal possible!

As a reminder, we challenged our hospitals to Join the Herd and Lead the PAC this election cycle, and that's precisely what you all did! You led us to forge beyond our two-year goal as we head into 2025. Our hospitals and individual contributors who helped realize this goal will be recognized at events throughout 2025. We look forward to celebrating this outstanding achievement with our members!

State and federal governments pay for more than half of Kansas hospital care and regulate 100 percent of our activities. Those are the main reasons why the work of the Kansas Hospital Association and its political action committee, KHA-PAC, is so important. Elected individuals with a passion and understanding of hospitals' unique role in their communities are critical. Your contributions to the KHA-PAC are used to support those who champion our issues.

To become a contributor anytime, visit <https://kha-pac.square.site/>. Additional information, including suggested contribution levels, can be found at <https://www.kha-net.org/AboutKHA/KHAPAC/>.

--Tara Mays

### **Excellence in Workforce Strategies – Comprehensive Approach Yields Great Nurse Retention and Recruitment**

(Nov. 22, 2024) – 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.



Jennifer McNeil, MSN, RN, CPHQ  
Director of Nursing Excellence



Anna Serner, MSN, RN, PCCN  
HR Director of Nursing



Claire Sutherlin, BSN, RN, CCRN  
Nursing Recruitment and  
Retention Program Coordinator

The American Hospital Association shared data indicating that half a million nurses would leave the field by the end of 2023, bringing the total shortage to 1.1 million. The University of Kansas Health System in Kansas City, Kansas, has established a multi-pronged approach to help overcome this looming challenge. The Nursing Recruitment and Retention Team was quickly convened to combat the rising need to attract and retain nursing staff post-pandemic. From the beginning, the team partnered hand-in-hand with the human resources talent acquisition team to understand the current state of the nursing workforce, brainstormed innovative strategies, created streamlined processes, collected meaningful and actionable data and tracked successes and opportunities.

"The team openly and honestly gathered feedback from all stakeholders, including hiring managers, talent acquisition consultants, schools of nursing and most importantly, new hires and candidates," said Jennifer McNeil, MSN, RN, CPHQ, director of nursing excellence and Magnet programs.

The NRRT bridged communication gaps between various teams within the health system so all teams were aligned. They implemented a flexible scheduling system to consider the personal needs of nurse associates while ensuring optimal patient care coverage. In the past two years, they have successfully launched multiple scholarship programs, a nurse extern program, a nurse associate entry program and different recruitment events. The NRRT worked closely with human resources to streamline recruitment and onboarding processes, ensuring a seamless experience for new hires.

The accomplishments in hiring, retention and recognition have been remarkable. Despite the competitive market, in 2023, the team improved their open vs. filled position rate by 6 percent. Students hired as nursing externs were partnered with a registered nurse preceptor for exposure to experiences. This program began in 2022 with seven externs and expanded to 15 in 2023. More than 50 percent of eligible nurse externs have accepted employment at The University of Kansas Health System as RNs. The team established partnerships with 71 unique nursing schools, contributing to 352 new graduate RNs being hired in 2023. As a result of these initiatives, nursing turnover for FY 2023 was 9.03 percent, while the national average was 22.5 percent.

"The NRRT has had a positive impact on nursing recruitment and retention at The University of Kansas Health System. The team continues to work to strengthen the nursing workforce and ensure sustainability. The candidate-centric approach has ensured that our patients receive consistent, high-quality care from dedicated and skilled nurses," said Claire Sutherlin, BSN, RN, CCRN nursing recruitment and retention manager."

--*Shelby Stacy*

### **Webinar on BCBS Providers Class Action Settlement Dec. 11**

The Blue Cross Blue Shield Providers Class Action Settlement resolves the allegations that BCBSA and Individual Blue Plans violated antitrust laws by illegally dividing the United States into "service areas" and agreeing not to compete with each other in those areas. The plaintiffs also claim to settle the defendant's fixed prices for services provided. The Court has not decided who is right or wrong. Instead, plaintiffs and settling defendants agreed to a \$2.8 billion settlement to avoid the risk and cost of further litigation. What does this mean for Kansas hospitals?

The Kansas Health Service Corporation has partnered with Class Action Capital for six years to assist Kansas Hospital Association members with cases like this. KHSC is hosting a webinar at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 11. Joshua Kerstein, CAC's director of business development, will discuss the landmark \$2.8 billion Blue Cross Blue Shield Providers Class Action settlement, claims process, and how this class action can affect your organization. This webinar will instruct hospitals to determine whether to join the class settlement or consider working independently. Class Action Capital can be of assistance no matter the hospital's decision.

[Click to Register](#)

--*Steve Poage*

### **Out-of-State Medicaid Enrollment and Billing Best Practices Webinar – Dec. 17**

Out-of-state Medicaid enrollment and billing are complex because of an ever-changing landscape of state-specific regulations and requirements. When managed effectively, it can be a legitimate revenue source. Join KHA from noon to 1:00 p.m. on Dec. 17 for an educational webinar when Elevate Patient Financial Solutions will review general requirements and best practices for OOS Medicaid in Kansas and neighboring states.



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--*Hayley Finch-Genschorck*

### **Kansas Crisis Standards of Care Guidance for Hospitals, Version 2, Now Available**

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment Preparedness Program recently released the [Kansas Crisis Standards of Care Guidance for Hospitals, Version 2](#), in PDF format, and is now available on the KDHE and [KHA websites](#). KSCSCG is a resource that assists hospitals in planning events that may require contingencies to help cope with the increased impact of a surge event or supply chain disruption. KSCSCG was created in 2022 and updated in 2023 with the help of professionals and community members to develop comprehensive, equitable guidance and an all-hazards approach. It is based on the work of the Community Advisory Board, the Technical Advisory Panel, and input from community stakeholders who participated in surveys, focus groups and interviews.

*--Ron Marshall*

### **CY 2023 Hardship Exception Application Deadline Nov. 30**

For the calendar year 2023 reporting period, eligible hospitals and Critical Access Hospitals must use 2015 Edition Cures Update certified electronic health record technology to meet the [Medicare Promoting Interoperability Program requirements](#). The deadline to submit a calendar year 2023 Hardship Exception application for the Medicare Promoting Interoperability Program for CAHs is Nov. 30, 2024.

Eligible hospitals and CAH may submit a [Medicare Promoting Interoperability Exception Application](#) citing decertified EHR technology, insufficient internet connectivity or extreme and uncontrollable circumstances.

The [Hardship Exception Fact Sheet](#) provides more information on the Hardship Exception process. Additional information regarding the program is available on the [Promoting Interoperability Program website](#). You can submit general questions to the [Quality Question and Answer Tool](#).

*--Sally Othmer*

### **HFMA and KHA All Payers Workshop – Dec. 12-13**

The [Sunflower \(Kansas\) Chapter of the Healthcare Financial Management Association](#) and the Kansas Hospital Association invite you to attend the All Payers Workshop on Dec. 12-13 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Manhattan.

The workshop includes presentations from the Kansas Division of Workers' Compensation, Wisconsin Physician Services, Veterans Administration, Optum, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Regional Office, KHA, commercial and Medicare Advantage insurers (Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas, Ambetter/Wellcare), the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, KanCare managed care organizations (Healthy Blue, Sunflower Health Plan and UnitedHealthcare) and the Great Plains Health Alliance.



This is an in-person-only event. The registration fee is \$100 per person for all attendees.



--Shannan Flach

### **KHC and KHA to Release Issue Briefs on Emergency Department Visits**

The Kansas Healthcare Collaborative and the Kansas Hospital Association are partnering to release a series of [issue briefs on Emergency Department visits](#) in Kansas, using the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality Emergency Department Prevention Quality Indicators. In September 2023, AHRQ released a new group of area-based quality measures called Emergency Department Prevention Quality Indicators. Five PQE measures reflect ED visit rates for potentially preventable ED visits. The PQEs are area-based measures, meaning they are evaluated and reported for geographic areas, usually counties. The PQEs are "avoidable use" measures in that they identify conditions sensitive to the health status of a county's population (or other area) and the availability and quality of health care services in the county. PQEs are not used to measure quality at the hospital level.

Emergency Department PQI Issue Briefs:

- [PQE 01 Visits for Non-Traumatic Dental Conditions, KS, FY23](#)
- [PQE 02 Visits for Chronic Ambulatory Care Sensitive Conditions, KS, FY23](#)
- [PQE 03 Visits for Acute Ambulatory Care Sensitive Conditions, Kansas, FY23](#)
- PQE 04 Visits for Asthma, Kansas, FY23

KHA and KHC hope the results of the issue briefs will be useful to hospitals and other organizations planning population health improvement activities, community health needs assessments, or other health improvement efforts.

--Karen Braman

### **New Resource Available from the Kansas Fire Marshal**

The Office of the State Fire Marshal has developed a tool all health care facilities may use to organize and retain fire safety documentation. During their inspections, they discovered many facilities either don't keep their documentation in a centralized location or are missing essential records altogether. This new tool aims to address these issues and alleviate some time constraints encountered during inspections for hospital staff and the fire marshal's inspectors. The [Healthcare Fire Book](#) is not a mandatory requirement for maintaining documentation, but it is a tool hospital staff may find helpful. This tool may be found on the KSFM and KHA hospital preparedness web pages.

--Ron Marshall



## Valuable Pathways Recognized During National Apprenticeship Week



In addition to the activities celebrating Rural Health Week, this past week was [National Apprenticeship Week](#). Gov. Laura Kelly signed a proclamation declaring Nov 18-22 as Apprenticeship Week in Kansas.

Fifteen Kansas hospitals have launched registered apprenticeship programs across 36 locations, with additional hospitals in onboarding. This accounts for nearly 100 health care professionals advancing their careers across more than a dozen clinical and non-clinical occupations. Apprenticeships offer a valuable pathway for health care team members to learn. At the same time, they earn and provide hospitals with an opportunity to improve retention by promoting career advancement and upskilling of staff.



Kansas continues to offer incentives for health care employers that grow their workforce through registered apprenticeships. Contact [Jaron Caffrey](#) to learn more.

--Jaron Caffrey



### External Webinars/Resources for OPPS/MPFS Final Rules

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services released the calendar year 2025 [Outpatient Prospective Payment System](#) and [Medicare Physician Fee Schedule](#) final rules on Nov. 1. The Kansas Hospital Association encourages members interested in learning more about the details of the CY 2025 CMS updates to review KHA's [final rule summaries](#) and consider participating in the below educational opportunities:

## Outpatient Prospective Payment System:

- PYA 2025 OPPTS Final Rule Review – Nov. 13  
View webinar recording: [2025 Hospital Outpatient Prospective Payment System Final Rule](#)
- DataGen 2025 OPPTS Final Rule and Analysis – From 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. on Dec. 5 –  
Registration is required  

- CMS Open Door Forum Reviewing CY 2025 OPPTS Final Rule – Rural Health on Nov. 21 and Hospitals on Dec. 17)  

- [Forvis Mazars 2025 OPPTS Final Rule Takeaways CY 2025 OPPTS Final Rule Takeaways](#)

## Medicare Physician Fee Schedule:

- [PYA Three-Part Webinar Series: 2025 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Final Rule](#) – Nov. 20, Dec. 4 and Dec. 11
- [PYA Webinar: Let's Get Rural – Regulatory Update and 2025 Final Rules](#) – Dec. 5  

- CMS Open Door Forum Reviewing CY 2025 MPFS Final Rule (Rural Health on Nov. 21 and Hospitals on Dec. 17)  


--Jaron Caffrey

## DEA and HHS Extend Telemedicine Flexibilities for Controlled Substances through 2025

After issuing its proposed telemedicine rules in 2023, the Drug Enforcement Administration received more than 38,000 comments and held two public listening sessions. After that feedback and discussion, the DEA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued a third extension of telemedicine flexibilities for prescribing controlled medications through Dec. 31, 2025. For more detailed information, see the full text of the [Third Temporary Extension of COVID-19 Telemedicine Flexibilities for Prescription of Controlled Medications](#) as published in the *Federal Register*.

--Karen Braman

## **APS Welcomes Vigilor from TRIMEDX to Its Roster of Services Provided to Hospitals**

APS is hosting an introductory webinar at 1 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 25, for a new vendor, [Vigilor from TRIMEDX](#), a division of Indianapolis-based clinical asset management company TRIMEDX, which delivers clinical engineering services, clinical asset informatics and medical device cybersecurity. They offer services that help identify and mitigate cybersecurity and patient safety risks associated with connected medical devices.

[Click to Register](#)

If you have questions or need additional information, contact [Dennis George](#) at (913) 327-8730.

--Dennis George

## **Federal and National News**

### **CDC Issues Health Advisory for First Case of Clade I Mpox Diagnosed in the U.S.**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a [health advisory](#) regarding the first case of clade I mpox identified in the U.S., along with guidance for health care providers on prevention, diagnosis, treatment and reporting of mpox cases.

On Nov. 15, the California Department of Public Health [confirmed](#) this initial case. The individual traveled to regions where the clade I monkeypox virus was circulating and sought medical attention for mpox symptoms upon returning to the U.S. Similar to other recent cases, this patient is experiencing mild illness and is on the path to recovery.

The CDC and local and state health departments are tracing potential contacts; as of Nov. 18, no further cases have been reported in the U.S. The overall [risk](#) of clade I mpox to the public remains low.

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

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

- [Medicare-Funded Physician Residency Positions](#)
- [CMS Roundup \(Nov. 15, 2024\)](#)
- [Hepatitis B Vaccine: Billing Requirement Update Effective Jan. 1](#)
- [Hospitals: Use Renewed Beneficiary Notices Starting Jan. 1](#)
- [National Rural Health Day: Address Unique Health Care Needs](#)
- [Lung Cancer: Help Your Patients Reduce Their Risk](#)