

# ADVANCING POPULATION HEALTH: KANSAS HOSPITALS SHARE THEIR STORIES

## Background

While treating patients remains a cornerstone mission, Kansas hospitals increasingly are moving outside the walls of their facilities to engage in activities aimed at improving the health of their communities. This focus on population health is driven by several factors, such as an aging population, an increased emphasis on disease prevention and a move away from a volume-based payment model to a value-based payment system.

Earlier this year, the Kansas Hospital Association (KHA) and the Kansas Health Institute (KHI) surveyed CEOs of KHA member hospitals and found that 75.5 percent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their hospitals should be engaged in population health work. Among the primary reasons hospitals gave were to “improve the health of their community” and to “reduce readmissions.” The results of the survey were published in a [November 2018 population health survey report](#), which is located at [kha-net.org](#) and [khi.org](#).

As a follow-up to the survey, KHA and KHI conducted in-depth interviews with eight hospital leaders and their staff or partners from across the state (*Figure 1, page 3*) to learn more about population health activities Kansas hospitals are implementing. This report summarizes those interviews.

## Defining Population Health

The definition of “population health” has evolved over time and often is confused with definitions



## Population Health Video

The Kansas Hospital Association (KHA) and the Kansas Health Institute (KHI) recently completed a video interviewing several key participants from hospitals across Kansas regarding their efforts in population health. To [view the video](#), visit [kha-net.org](#) or [khi.org](#).

of “community health” or “population health management.” The American Hospital Association (AHA) describes population health as both a goal and a strategy to foster healthy, equitable populations through linking clinical and community-based approaches. According to the AHA, population health encompasses population health management and community health. To help hospitals and health systems connect population health management and population health concepts, this report offers a summary definition of population health that links a definition developed by David Kindig and Greg Stoddart with a definition developed by the AHA.

### Summary Definition of Population Health

Strategies that link clinical and non-clinical approaches (such as housing or access to food) for improving the health of a group of individuals, including the distribution of such outcomes within the group. These groups can be geographically defined (e.g., zip code or city) or they may share some characteristics (such as age or income level).

Hospital leaders were asked how they define population health to help provide insights into how their definition shaped the activities their organizations undertook to address factors affecting health in their communities. While the definitions varied, interviewees agreed population health includes components such as work beyond the hospital walls, identification of community needs, involvement in the community and efforts to tackle social determinants of health.

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According to **Stormont Vail Health** (Topeka), its definition of population health involves ...

*... Reaching out to impact people who have not yet presented as our patients. ... As we are looking at the true definition of improving the health of our community, it is more than just treating the people that hit your door, and it's more than using measures we have traditionally looked at as a health system.*



— Amy Kincade, M.B.A., B.S.N., R.N., Vice President, Population Health Management, Stormont Vail Health, Topeka



— Sridevi Donepudi, M.D., M.M.M., F.A.A.F.P., Vice President and Chief Medical Quality Officer, Stormont Vail Health, Topeka

See CASE STUDY: Stormont Vail Health Population Health Journey, page 8

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Mercy Hospital Fort Scott (Fort Scott) emphasized that its definition of population health focuses on the whole community. According to the hospital ...

*... We're pretty lucky, in the sense that our population health really is community health because we have a small community and we have a small population here to address the community health and those health outcomes.*

— Jody Hoener, L.B.S.W., M.B.A., Clinic Quality and Community Benefit Liaison, Mercy Hospital Fort Scott

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Lincoln County Hospital (Lincoln) defined population health as ...

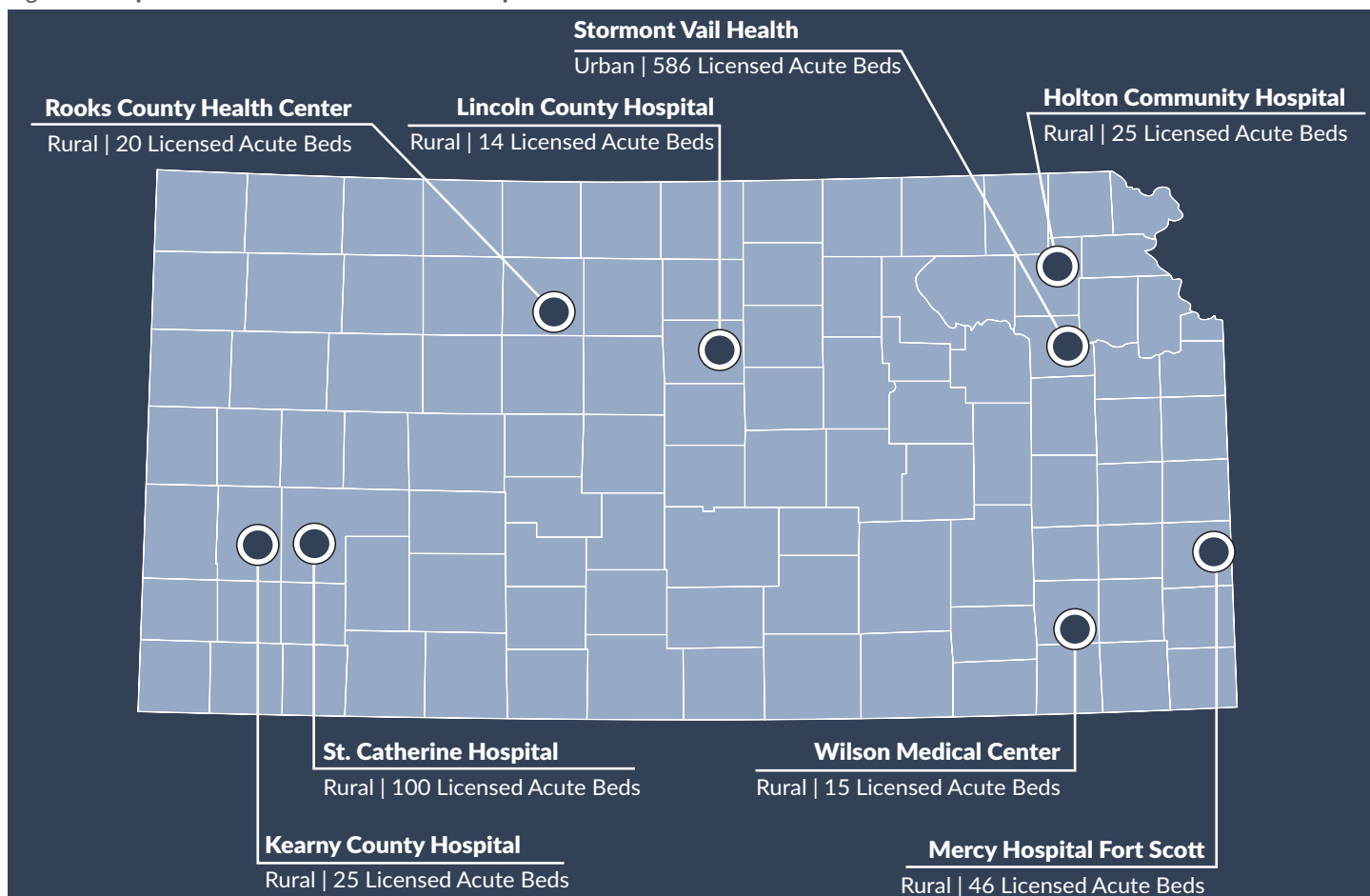
*... Participating in activities that we hope will improve outcomes for our people.*

— Steven Granzow, M.B.A., Chief Executive Officer, Lincoln County Hospital, Lincoln

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Figure 1. Population Health Interview Participants



Source: Advancing Population Health: Kansas Hospitals Share Their Stories, December 2018 and 2017 KHA/AHA Annual Survey.

## Deciding to Engage in Population Health

To better understand the impetus for hospitals actively engaging in population health work, interviewees were asked to describe why their hospital or health system made that decision. Many hospitals emphasized because “it is the right thing to do” or it is “aligned with their mission.”

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According to **Wilson Medical Center** (Neodesha),

*As a hospital, we have to be the leaders, working and bringing everybody together to change and make that bend of the curve (better health outcomes) actually happen.*

— Dennis Shelby, M.S.W.,  
Chief Executive Officer, Wilson Medical Center, Neodesha

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See CASE STUDY: *Wilson Medical Center Population Health Journey*, page 5

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**Rooks County Health Center** (Plainville) echoed this perspective and noted,

*Our job is to look at the health of who we're here to serve and make them as healthy as possible.*



— AJ Thomas, P.T., D.P.T.,  
M.S., Board Certified  
Clinical Specialist in  
Sports Physical Therapy,  
CEO Rooks County  
Health Center, Plainville

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Stormont Vail Health (Topeka) stressed that ...

*... Improving the health of our community is core to our mission. We can't do that by just providing episodic care, treating the patients as they hit our doors; we have to reach out to the community and identify what are we missing, who are we missing, and how do we help close those gaps.*

— Sridevi Donepudi, M.D., M.M.M., F.A.A.F.P.,  
Vice President and Chief Medical Quality Officer,  
Stormont Vail Health, Topeka



Other reasons provided by hospitals included: poor health rankings in their community, a call to action “to commit to be a Healthy Kansas Hospital” by the Kansas Hospital Association, and the movement toward reimbursement based on value of care versus volume of services. Several hospitals noted the significance of the County Health Rankings (CHR) report published annually by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), and how data on health outcomes and health factors in their communities were drivers for bringing stakeholders together, securing buy-in, and identifying focus areas to improve the health of their communities.



For **Kearny County Hospital** (Lakin), a movement toward value-based care led to the realization that the hospital needs to help people stay healthy even when they're not in the hospital.

*(At) Kearny County Hospital, we've made a decision that we want to do health care vs. sick care and to be a player in preventative health care. This really gave (us) that opportunity by (providing) access to healthy foods, active living and addressing tobacco use.*



— Kendal Carswell,  
L.M.S.W., L.C.A.C.,  
Program Director,  
Kearny County Hospital,  
Lakin



See CASE STUDY: *Kearny County Hospital Population Health Journey*, page 10





## CASE STUDY: Wilson Medical Center Population Health Journey

Wilson Medical Center in Neodesha began its population health journey after accepting the



— Dennis Shelby, M.S.W.,  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Wilson Medical Center,  
Neodesha

Healthy Kansas Hospitals call to action issued by the Kansas Hospital Association, according to Dennis Shelby, M.S.W., Wilson Medical Center CEO. The goal of the hospital was to bend the curve on the poor health status of southeast Kansas citizens, as evidenced by the County Health Rankings (<http://bit.ly/2SnhK89>). Hospital leadership worked to forge relationships in the community

to help improve the health of their residents. In addition to County Health Rankings, the hospital relied on data from Kansas Health Matters ([www.kansashealthmatters.org](http://www.kansashealthmatters.org)) and Kids Count (<http://bit.ly/2DThBoP>) to demonstrate the need and identify areas of focus for their population health activities.

After working on healthy food and beverage options within the hospital, Wilson Medical Center began working with restaurants to provide healthy, appealing options in the community. One of the restaurants they work with promotes the partnership by placing the hospital logo next to healthy menu items. The restaurant is considering table tents as another avenue to promote healthy

choices. Wilson Medical Center plans to work with grocery stores next on promoting a variety of healthy products.

To address transportation issues, Wilson Medical Center is engaged with the City of Neodesha to form an Active Transportation Advisory Board (ATAB) that also will work together with neighboring Fredonia to form a countywide ATAB. The goal is to bring together community members who are passionate about making their community more walkable and bikeable. Shelby cited the importance of passing a resolution to make all community parks and recreation areas tobacco-free, which was aided by a Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) chronic disease risk reduction grant. To encourage and support additional physical activity in Neodesha, Wilson Medical Center hired an athletic trainer to help improve student health in the local school district. To sustain this effort long-term, the hospital is pursuing grant funding. It also subsidizes a 24/7 fitness center that offers corporate discounts to encourage participation from community employers.

Among lessons learned, Shelby cites the importance of data and partnerships. While the hospital is a leader in its population health initiatives, Shelby emphasizes the importance of bringing the right people together, finding champions in the community who are passionate about health, walkability and bikeability of their community, and letting them lead efforts they are passionate about.

# Addressing Social, Environmental and Behavioral Factors

Hospital interviewees described a variety of efforts to address social determinants of health, including areas such as physical activity, food insecurity, transportation and housing. To identify areas for action in their communities, hospitals used data, mapping tools and results from their Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNAs), Community Health Improvement Plans (CHIPs), and other community-wide needs assessments. For example, the CHNA process helped Holton Community Hospital (Holton) identify poverty and food insecurity as key issues. Additionally, most hospitals interviewed identified new or additional population health activities for the future, including working with schools and other community stakeholders.

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Over the past year, **St. Catherine Hospital** (Garden City) supported transportation needs of its patients and worked to identify ways to address food insecurity. Moving forward, St. Catherine Hospital expressed interest in furthering efforts to promote healthy eating by collaborating with schools.



— Kayte Fulton, M.S.,  
Director of Community  
Health, Mission  
Integration and  
Patient Experience, St.  
Catherine Hospital,  
Garden City

*We have high rates of diabetes ... and obesity, and I think it's our responsibility as the hospital in the community to be thinking twice about how to create healthier kids (who) become healthier adults.*



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For **Stormont Vail Health** (Topeka), County Health Rankings and mapping data were critical to gaining an understanding of issues in the community and identifying food insecurity as an area of focus.

*One of the things we have discovered in our early review of heat maps of our community was that obesity is a huge problem in our area. And that somewhat surprising and maybe not intuitive component of how obesity is related to food insecurity, and the choices that people have (such as) the lack of fresh fruits and vegetables and the availability of convenience food. Cheap food, most of the time, is not the most nutritious food.*

— Sridevi Donepudi, M.D., M.M.M., F.A.A.F.P.,  
Vice President and Chief Medical Quality Officer,  
Stormont Vail Health, Topeka

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To address this issue Stormont Vail Health partnered with Harvesters. The efforts have focused on identifying innovative ways to partner with food pantries to increase access to healthy food for patients.

Rooks County Health Center (Plainville), provides exercise opportunities for its senior population and cooking classes to “help with healthy lifestyle choices.” Rooks County Health Center also provides transportation for community members to get to those activities.

To help address food insecurity, several hospitals reported that they had implemented summer food programs in their communities. **Lincoln County Hospital** (Lincoln) noted its summer food program is funded through the State Department of Education with USDA grants, and that the hospital provides staff for the program out of its operations budget. Other hospital staff also volunteer with the program.

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Based on its community assessment results, **Kearny County Hospital** (Lakin) implemented several initiatives in the areas of physical activity and healthy eating. After learning the number one priority for community residents was access to walking paths, the hospital created ...

*... A walking and biking plan for Lakin and Deerfield which includes priority sidewalks, some options for trails projects, some crosswalks, bike lanes (and) a bike share program that's completely free for Kearny County residents.*



– Krysta Harvey, M.P.H.,  
Director of Grant  
Projects and Population  
Health, Kearny County  
Hospital, Lakin

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Kearny County Hospital also started a summer food program for children and purchased several greenhouses. One of the greenhouses was placed at a nearby school, and future plans include locating a greenhouse on the hospital grounds near its long-term care facility. Recently, the hospital has taken an active role in housing projects by partnering with developers and guaranteeing the rent on new moderate income units for the first year.

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**Wilson Medical Center** (Neodesha) utilized County Health Rankings, Kansas Health Matters and Kids Count among other data sources to help inform its population health efforts. To support and promote healthy eating, Wilson Medical Center is ...

*... Trying to partner with local restaurants and diners to have healthy options more pleasing to choose from and making sure that people see those items. ... working with grocery stores to promote different healthy products (and) trying to get restaurants or businesses to look at exploring healthy incentives for their employees.*

– Dennis Shelby, M.S.W.,  
Chief Executive Officer, Wilson Medical  
Center, Neodesha

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– Jody Hoener, L.B.S.W.,  
M.B.A., Clinic Quality  
and Community Benefit  
Liaison, Mercy Hospital  
Fort Scott

Before initiating population health efforts, **Mercy Hospital Fort Scott** (Fort Scott) promoted community involvement to secure buy-in. It ...

*... put together a coalition of key stakeholders who are in positions of authority to make decisions about policies and system changes that affect the social determinants of health. ... (The community) was able to pass a non-motorized transportation plan ... which created systems of safe walking – regardless of socioeconomic status.*

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St. Catherine Hospital (Garden City), in collaboration with LiveWell Finney County, created an indoor walking path in the hospital. The trail is one-seventh of a mile, located on the lower level near the cafeteria, and clearly marked with a stripe on the wall.



— Callie Dyer, B.S.,  
Executive Director,  
LiveWell Finney County,  
Garden City

*It's something as simple as walkability, encouraging people to walk.*

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Additionally, LiveWell Finney County created a prescription pad for walking that providers can use to recommend walking to their patients who might benefit from increased physical activity. The prescription includes the trail system that easily identifies routes.



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Lincoln County Hospital (Lincoln) also engaged in addressing access to physical activity.

*That's part of what we're working on with the health department is the trail development programs and projects. We've already mapped out trails here in Lincoln, Kansas — one in Sylvan (Grove) and one in Barnard.*

— Steven Granzow, M.B.A.,  
Chief Executive Officer, Lincoln County Hospital, Lincoln

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## CASE STUDY: Stormont Vail Health Population Health Journey

In 2011, Stormont Vail Health in Topeka started a population health journey when it created a new position focused on enhancing care coordination, providing continuum of care and reducing readmission rates. As the hospital began looking for solutions, the decision was made to address the needs of patients in the community rather than just providing episodic care or treating patients only when they come to the hospital.

To identify community issues, Stormont Vail Health used heat maps, a flexible data visualization tool.



Stormont Vail Health

The findings revealed that obesity was a significant problem. The results also showed that parts of the community lacked adequate access to fresh fruits and vegetables and relied on convenience stores that primarily carried foods of low nutritional value. Additionally, some households experienced food insecurity, a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food. To address these issues, the hospital engaged in a strategic partnership with Harvesters, a nonprofit food network, to explore innovative solutions for connecting patients to food resources.

Stormont Vail Health plans to expand its population health efforts in the future, as this aligns with its mission. However, the hospital recognizes an investment in this work will be required, because the health care system is still in transition from fee-for-service to value-based reimbursement.

For hospitals interested in engaging in population health, Stormont Vail Health suggests focusing on securing internal buy-in. According to the hospital, this can be achieved by sharing with staff and board success stories from other organizations, engaging physicians early in the process and increasing awareness that improving population health takes time and true commitment.



## Securing Buy-In

When implementing and sustaining initiatives, it is important to have internal and external support. Hospitals interviewed were asked what tactics or strategies they used to secure buy-in from stakeholders. Hospitals highlighted several strategies that helped generate support for their population health initiative. Most reported utilizing health-related data such as County Health Rankings, their own survey data, or data on health risks such as fall prevention, to demonstrate the need for engaging in population health and selecting areas of focus. Additionally, hospitals provided examples to their staff and external stakeholders about population health activities that have resulted in improved outcomes in other states.

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According to **Holton Community Hospital** (Holton),

*The best way to ensure buy-in from your stakeholders is developing that relationship with them and helping them really understand what the issue at hand is.*



— Carrie Saia, B.S.N., M.S.M., F.A.C.H.E., Chief Executive Officer, Holton Community Hospital, Holton

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**Mercy Hospital Fort Scott** (Fort Scott) and **Wilson Medical Center** (Neodesha) also discussed the importance of County Health Rankings data to their efforts. Wilson Medical Center used other data sources such as Kansas Health Matters and Kids Count Kansas to help identify areas of focus for their hospital.

In addition to data, hospitals indicated that building relationships and identifying community champions for carrying messages also helped secure buy-in.

To address population health, many hospitals are engaging with their local health departments and other hospitals on county-wide issues. For example, **Wilson Medical Center** (Neodesha) noted it is working with Fredonia Regional Hospital and the Wilson County Health Department on the Community Health Improvement Plan for Wilson County.

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For **Mercy Hospital Fort Scott** (Fort Scott), securing buy-in is ...

*... One critical piece to our work. Being able to have a community champion that provides a consistent and persistent message is absolutely essential. ... getting key shareholders to be a part of the process ... and that includes not only people with authority to make decisions, but those people who you wouldn't necessarily hear from, those vulnerable populations.*

— Jody Hoener, L.B.S.W., M.B.A., Clinic Quality and Community Benefit Liaison, Mercy Hospital Fort Scott

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**Stormont Vail Health** (Topeka) indicated that County Health Rankings and other data were critical in building a common understanding of community issues and securing buy-in. Sharing best practices from other states was another strategy utilized by the hospital.

*From (our) internal stakeholders' perspective, (we need to make) sure or help to inform them on what is going on regarding other parts of the country and what are the shifts (others) have seen there that may potentially affect us here and how we need to adapt and be prepared for that.*

— Sridevi Donepudi, M.D., M.M.M., F.A.A.F.P., Vice President and Chief Medical Quality Officer, Stormont Vail Health, Topeka

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To garner internal support, a number of hospitals, including **Holton Community Hospital** (Holton) and **Lincoln County Hospital** (Lincoln) reported providing up to eight hours of paid work time to hospital employees to volunteer in the community. This engagement in community volunteerism was noted as impactful to help employees become further connected to the needs of and resources in their communities.



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**Kearny County Hospital** (Lakin) emphasized the critical role of community engagement and how it can be leveraged to secure buy-in.

*The most important thing Kearny County Hospital did on this journey was ask patients what was important to them. Not just patients, but the entire community.*



– Benjamin Anderson,  
M.B.A., M.H.C.D.S.,  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Kearny County Hospital,  
Lakin

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## CASE STUDY: Kearny County Hospital Population Health Journey

Over the last several years, **Kearny County Hospital** (Lakin) experienced an increase in the volume of patients and intensity of services provided. The hospital was alarmed by the fact it ranked 83 out of 101 ranked counties in Kansas in terms of health outcomes.

These changes led Kearny County Hospital decision-makers to ask: “Do the services we provide improve the health of our community?” To answer this question and to better understand community needs, hospital staff, in collaboration with the University of Kansas School of Medicine, Wichita, administered a comprehensive community assessment. To help increase the response rate to the survey, Kearny County utilized grant funding to provide an incentive to complete the survey – a \$10 Subway gift card or chamber bucks that could be used in the local community. The survey results showed that some services (e.g., social, mental health) important to residents were not currently available at the hospital.

In order to address these gaps and become a place that “helps patients to stay healthy when they are not coming into our hospital doors,” Kearny County Hospital embarked on activities that focused on creating healthy environment at schools, restaurants,



grocery stores and worksites. As part of these efforts, hospital staff, with partners, developed a walking and biking plan which included priority sidewalks, options for trail projects and bike lanes. Several greenhouses were built, and a free bike share program in the city was launched. Funding for these activities came from a “Pathways to a Healthy Kansas” grant provided by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas.

Housing was another area of focus for Kearny County Hospital. To support the development of moderate-income housing units in the community, the hospital partnered with developers to guarantee the rent of these units for the first year.

As Kearny County Hospital continues this population health journey, it plans to capitalize on lessons learned regarding the importance of building relationships with community partners through personal interactions rather than just social media or emails.

# Challenges and Barriers to Engaging In and Sustaining Population Health Work

To identify needs and strategies for addressing barriers to engaging in population health, interviewees were asked about challenges to implementing and sustaining a population health focus in their facilities and in their communities. Availability of organizational resources, establishing effective collaboration with community partners, changing the internal culture, and supporting the needs of a diverse population within their communities are a few examples of barriers that hospitals experienced. To address these barriers, hospitals emphasized the importance of being visible and engaged in the community, establishing cross-functional partnerships to share the workload, and pursuing grants or other external funding.

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**Rooks County Health Center** (Plainville) noted that a limited number of financial structures exists to support the work of hospitals in population health.

*We can say that we're moving to a value-based system, but we're still paid volume-based.*

— AJ Thomas, P.T., D.P.T., M.S.,  
Board Certified Clinical Specialist in  
Sports Physical Therapy,  
CEO Rooks County Health Center,  
Plainville

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**Kearny County Hospital** (Lakin) emphasized that changing the culture can be a significant challenge to embarking on population health.

*If we want to see these (health) outcomes change, we have to make the right thing easier and make the wrong thing more difficult. Making the right thing easier is popular, making the wrong thing more difficult is where it gets controversial, and both are necessary if we're going to change human behavior.*

— Benjamin Anderson, M.B.A., M.H.C.D.S.,  
Chief Executive Officer, Kearny County Hospital, Lakin

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To address these barriers, St. Catherine Hospital (Garden City) has been working to ensure that staff is trained to be culturally responsive, and to be out in the community.

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**St. Catherine Hospital** (Garden City) highlighted two main challenges it has experienced:

*Limitations as far as finances (and) ... meeting the needs of all of the cultures that we serve as there are 26 unique languages in our elementary school.*

— Kayte Fulton, M.S., Director of Community Health,  
Mission Integration and Patient Experience,  
St. Catherine Hospital, Garden City



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## Key Successes

Hospitals were asked to describe key successes resulting from their population health activities and factors that helped enable these successes. Interviewees noted different types of successes, including developing a task force or local health coalition, maintaining strong partnerships with community stakeholders, creating more opportunities for physical activity such as bike share programs or walking trails, providing transportation, and establishing healthy policies and infrastructure in the community.

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Mercy Hospital Fort Scott (Fort Scott) highlighted several successes related to engaging in population health.

*We have been awarded a Community Health Champion award at the Kansas State of Wellness (Symposium). We have been able to implement a non-motorized transportation plan and the Bourbon County Food Alliance. We now see five restaurants with locally produced food and five food retail (outlets) promoting locally produced food. There has been policy change ... in two school districts and six different school buildings. We have seen worksite wellness policies implemented in three different worksites, and we expect to see more from there. We have been able to implement two different lifestyle change programs at the hospital level.*

— Jody Hoener, L.B.S.W., M.B.A., Clinic Quality and Community Benefit Liaison, Mercy Hospital Fort Scott

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For St. Catherine Hospital (Garden City),

*Creating LiveWell Finney County was our biggest success because, in so far as St. Catherine has been the launching pad and the supporter of the coalition, we've participated in all of the successes that have happened in some way. Whether we are a subcontractor on a grant or our staff is participating in a particular aspect ... we are so connected, we're so intertwined with the agencies within the coalition as a hospital.*

— Kayte Fulton, M.S.,  
Director of Community Health, Mission Integration and Patient Experience,  
St. Catherine Hospital, Garden City

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According to Holton Community Hospital (Holton),

*There are two key things to make sure you have success. At our hospital we are making sure that the need is identified in the community. Knowing your community and knowing that just because it works at a community in the state of Kansas doesn't mean that's what your community needs. We started a healthy living task force that was made up of different agencies after our last CHNA, making sure that we have the right voices at the right table.*

— Carrie Saia, B.S.N., M.S.M., F.A.C.H.E., Chief Executive Officer,  
Holton Community Hospital, Holton

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## Lessons Learned

Hospitals shared several valuable lessons they learned while advancing population health efforts in their respective communities. Most hospitals emphasized the importance of establishing relationships with community stakeholders, coalition building, and empowering and engaging staff and local community members to lead change. Other suggestions included focusing on building strong relationships with partners across sectors, engaging communities to identify their specific needs, and understanding that addressing social determinants of health in the community takes time; there is no quick fix.

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According to **Lincoln County Hospital** (Lincoln),



— Steven Granzow, M.B.A., Chief Executive Officer, Lincoln County Hospital, Lincoln

*You've got to be able to convince people of the value of engaging in this (population health) work.*

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**Wilson Medical Center** (Neodesha) emphasized that in order to advance population health, it is critical to get buy-in from people.

*... Find their passion and let them be leaders in the community.*

— Dennis Shelby, M.S.W., Chief Executive Officer, Wilson Medical Center, Neodesha

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**Mercy Hospital Fort Scott** (Fort Scott) suggested that their lessons learned are ...

*... Just knowing who your partners are, knowing their strengths, and knowing their abilities, and being able to build upon those strengths. And knowing that it's not going to happen overnight.*

— Jody Hoener, L.B.S.W., M.B.A., Clinic Quality and Community Benefit Liaison, Mercy Hospital Fort Scott

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Kearny County Hospital (Lakin) emphasized that sending emails or Facebook announcements might be less effective than calling people and making personal connections.

*If I call someone that I know specifically and explain what's going on and why I want them to be a part of it, then they respond; then they'll participate. They'll show up to the event, they'll invite all of their friends, they'll get on board.*

— Krysta Harvey, M.P.H.,  
Director of Grant Projects and Population Health, Kearny County Hospital, Lakin

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## Examples of Population Health Activities

During the interviews, participants recommended identifying practical ideas for advancing population health efforts as a way to help others get started or continue progress in this area. *Figure 2, page 15, provides examples of population health related activities for the following areas: transportation, housing, early childhood–12th grade, community workforce/employment, access to healthy foods, access to health care, economic development and environmental quality. In addition to the examples listed in Figure 2, hospitals and health systems could integrate the focus on each area (e.g., transportation, housing) in the strategic plans of their organizations.*

The authors of this report hope that these examples help hospitals and health systems identify strategies that might work for their organizations and communities.

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Stormont Vail Health (Topeka) indicated it is critical to recognize that ...

*... It is the long game and it is thinking about what is the true driver. If you maintain that focus is truly being about wanting to improve the health of your community, wanting to improve the health of the patients that you serve and the patients that live in the communities you are in ... having our physicians at the table to talk through quality opportunities for their patients is key. The earlier you can do that, the better.*

— Amy Kincade, M.B.A., B.S.N., R.N.,  
Vice President, Population Health Management,  
Stormont Vail Health, Topeka

— Sridevi Donepudi, M.D., M.M.M., F.A.A.F.P.,  
Vice President and Chief Medical Quality Officer,  
Stormont Vail Health, Topeka

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Holton Community Hospital (Holton) noted that it is important to ...

*... Start with a clear definition of what "population health" is. ... List out the initiatives that we're working on. Make sure you're talking about it and using that language so that all employees have the same understanding/definition of what work you are doing.*

— Carrie Saia, B.S.N., M.S.M., F.A.C.H.E., Chief Executive Officer,  
Holton Community Hospital, Holton

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**Figure 2. Examples of Population Health Activities**

<b>Transportation</b>	
✓ Incorporate transportation question(s) into patient intake forms to identify transportation needs and connect individuals that have transportation needs to social and health care services (e.g., grocery stores, jobs, clinic visits, pharmacy, outpatient visits)	✓ Support and/or participate in the development of policies that create safer and more accessible transportation options (e.g., Complete Streets, Safe Sidewalks)
✓ Develop a bike share program	✓ Participate in local transportation planning processes
<b>Housing</b>	
✓ Incorporate housing question(s) into patient intake forms to identify housing needs of patients and connect individuals to social services	✓ Provide subsidies for home repairs or connect patients to resources that subsidize home repairs
✓ Offer home safety assessments for environmental hazards and health risks (e.g., lead, pests, etc.)	✓ Participate in the development of affordable housing units and/or short-term transitional housing units
<b>Early Childhood-12th Grade</b>	
✓ Participate in the implementation of initiatives such as safe walking routes to school, farm-to-school programs and school gardens	✓ Provide or identify funding for water bottle refill stations at schools
✓ Provide or support childcare, before- and after-school programs	✓ Provide breastfeeding support and nutrition education for new parents/caregivers
<b>Community Workforce/Employment</b>	
✓ Use a screening tool to identify needs related to unemployment or underemployment and connect individuals to services	✓ Provide pre-employment coaching, advice, guidance, assistance with resume development
✓ Support training programs and/or provide scholarships to students to gain training in careers needed in the community	✓ Support and/or participate in the development of policies that help create, sustain and retain a viable workforce
<b>Access to Healthy Foods</b>	
✓ Incorporate question(s) into patient intake forms to identify individuals who experience food insecurity and connect individuals to social services (e.g., food pantries, emergency food organizations)	✓ Support assessment of community food environment and assist in the development and/or implementation of farmers markets, community gardens or greenhouses
✓ Work with local grocery providers and restaurants to offer fresh, affordable, healthy choices	✓ Support and/or participate in the development of policies that focus on affordability and accessibility of healthy foods
<b>Access to Health Care</b>	
✓ Provide transportation to health care services (e.g., clinics, pharmacies)	✓ Use community health workers to coordinate care and connect patients to community resources
✓ Institute programs focused on improving patient care coordination (e.g., home visits, patient navigator)	✓ Offer telehealth services (health care services provided over a distance via telephone or videoconference)
<b>Economic Development</b>	
✓ Facilitate recruitment of businesses to the community	✓ Support local businesses and engage local businesses in population health activities (e.g., local restaurants, farmers)
✓ Support workforce needs assessments in the community	✓ Address conditions of blight in the community
<b>Environmental Quality</b>	
✓ Participate in/support the assessment of water and air quality	✓ Provide education to community/staff about environmental issues and related health risks
✓ Participate in the planning and development of green infrastructure (e.g., community space at the hospital, planter boxes next to the road or parking lots)	✓ Support and/or participate in the development of policies that improve air quality (e.g., tobacco-free parks, idle-free zones)
<p><i>Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps Action Center, Kansas Health Matters and the American Hospital Association Social Determinants of Health Guides (Housing, Transportation and Food Insecurity), November 2017.</i></p>	



## Conclusion

Hospital leaders defined population health in a variety of ways. However, common elements across the definitions included work beyond the walls of the hospital, identification of community health needs, involvement in the community, and efforts to tackle social determinants of health. Many hospitals emphasized that engaging in population health “is the right thing to do” or it is “aligned with their mission.”

To address factors impacting health in their community, the interviewees indicated they implemented activities across multiple areas, including physical activity, food insecurity, transportation and housing, among others. To secure buy-in for population health work, hospitals noted the importance of using data from their community to demonstrate the need and select the areas of focus. Additionally, hospitals provided examples to their staff and external stakeholders of population health activities that have resulted in improved outcomes in other states.

In general, hospitals reported many successes with population health efforts, such as the establishment of a task force or local coalition focused on health issues, strengthening partnerships with community stakeholders, creating more opportunities for

physical activity such as bike share programs or walking trails, providing transportation, and passing policies related to infrastructure that supports healthy living in the community.

Hospitals also experienced challenges working in this area such as availability of organizational resources, establishing effective collaboration with community partners, culture change and supporting the needs of a diverse population within their communities. To address these challenges or barriers, hospitals stressed the importance of being visible and engaged in the community, establishing cross-functional partnerships to share the workload, and pursuing grants or other external funding.

During their population health journey, hospitals learned valuable lessons. To advance population health efforts, hospitals recommended establishing relationships with community stakeholders, strengthening or developing local health coalitions, and empowering and engaging staff and local community members to lead change. Other suggestions included focusing on building strong relationships with partners across sectors, engaging communities to identify their specific needs, and understanding that addressing social determinants of health in the community takes time; there is no quick fix.

### ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is based on work by Tatiana Y. Lin, M.A., Strategy Team Leader from the Kansas Health Institute, and Karen Braman, RPh, M.S., Senior Vice President, Healthcare Strategy and Policy, from the Kansas Hospital Association. It is available online at [khi.org](http://khi.org) and [kha-net.org](http://kha-net.org).

The titles listed for individuals quoted in this report reflect the titles they held at the time of interview.

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