

## EVENT RECAP

### County Health Rankings in a Changing Kansas

The population of Kansas is aging, becoming increasingly diverse and moving away from rural areas. It is important for policymakers and other stakeholders to understand the opportunities and challenges presented by these changing demographics as they make decisions that impact health.

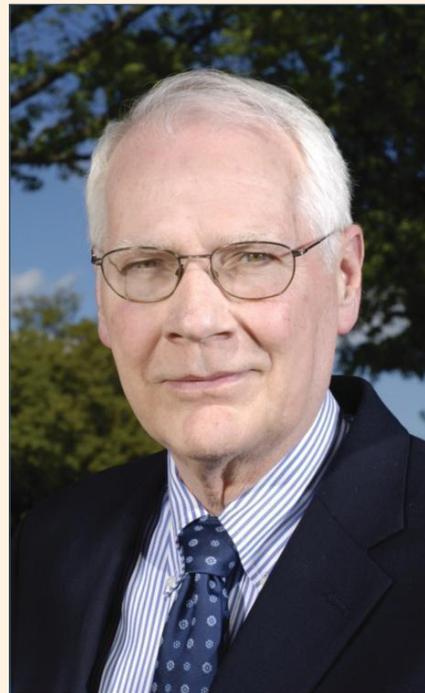
On May 8, 2019, the Kansas Health Institute (KHI), in collaboration with the Kansas Hospital Association (KHA), convened 172 stakeholders from across the state to discuss how to use data from the [2019 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps](#) to adapt to changing needs in Kansas. The event was hosted simultaneously at KHI in Topeka, Neosho Memorial Regional Medical Center in Chanute and Republic County Hospital in Belleville, with additional online participants from across the state.

## A Changing Kansas

D. Charles Hunt, M.P.H., KHI senior analyst, kicked off the discussion by explaining how the population of Kansas is expected to change over the next 50 years. Using data from the 2018 KHI report [A Changing Kansas: Implications for Health and Communities](#), Hunt explained that population growth in Kansas since the year 2000 has been driven by increases in urban areas and in minority populations — trends which are expected to continue.

## Where We Live Matters

Gianfranco Pezzino, M.D., M.P.H., KHI senior fellow, then discussed the concept of social determinants of health, which are the social and economic conditions that influence health status. He focused on how social determinants shape population health and explained how to interpret data from the Rankings in the context of the changing population. Pezzino emphasized the importance of assessing the health status of subgroups of populations, rather than stopping with a comparison of county-level indicators. Race, ethnicity, income, education, wealth disparities and other factors provide clues to identifying groups of people with a higher risk of adverse health outcomes and fewer opportunities to improve their health.



*“Health does not begin in the doctor’s office. It does not begin in the prevention and promotion initiatives. It begins in the community, and it begins with the social and physical determinants of health in the community.”*

– Keynote speaker Ron Manderscheid, Ph.D.,  
Executive Director for the National Association of  
County Behavioral Health and  
Developmental Disability Directors.

Find materials from the convening on our website  
at <http://bit.ly/2W6soSa>.

## Community Collaboration

During breakout sessions, participants were asked to discuss their County Health Rankings data and identify factors that might be contributing to adverse health outcomes. Luke Mahin, Republic County director for economic development, highlighted the need to address inequality in services, such as transportation and housing, to help people living in poverty. Dennis Franks, CEO of Neosho Memorial Regional Medical Center, described success in the community since establishing the Neosho County Health Care Task Force, whose many stakeholders include partners outside of health sectors. Stakeholders in Shawnee County discussed having challenges in areas such as adult obesity and physical inactivity, even though there are opportunities to exercise — and concluded there might be financial or transportation barriers to address.

# Making the Most of County Health Data

The keynote address was given by Ron Manderscheid, Ph.D., executive director for the National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors. He discussed the intersection of behavioral and population health and described policy options that can leverage county health data to improve health outcomes in Kansas communities, such as:

- Addressing social isolation in rural communities by establishing drop-in centers;
- Building community-level partnerships that involve the private, public and not-for-profit sectors, including churches and religious institutions;
- Reducing the number of uninsured Kansans;
- Leveraging telehealth solutions to address behavioral health care access in rural communities;
- Moving “upstream” to address social determinants of health (e.g., transportation and housing); and
- Ensuring that efforts to improve population health are driven locally with support from state entities.

Manderscheid also discussed improving behavioral health by treating and preventing trauma, using peers to help individuals regain their social roles in a community, and increasing opportunities for individuals with behavioral health conditions to exercise self-determination.

## Community Collaboration

Following the keynote address, Robert F. St. Peter, M.D., KHI president and CEO, facilitated a panel discussion with John Jacobson, M.H.A., CEO of Atchison County Hospital, Jody Hoener, L.B.S.W., M.B.A., economic development director for Bourbon County, and Les Sperling, B.A., L.A.C., president and CEO of Recovery PRN, LLC. The panel discussed the importance of cross-sector collaboration in the



Special thanks to panelists John Jacobson, M.H.A., CEO of Atchison County Hospital, Jody Hoener, L.B.S.W., M.B.A., economic development director for Bourbon County, and Les Sperling, B.A., L.A.C., president and CEO of Recovery PRN, LLC.

community. Jacobson discussed understanding how health is affected by what happens outside the walls of the hospital. Hoener underscored the health sector as a driver of economic development. Sperling described the effect mental health and substance use disorder have on hospital readmissions. All panelists discussed the need for community-wide solutions.

## Need for Innovation

Closing remarks were delivered by Tom Bell, president and CEO of the Kansas Hospital Association, and Lee A. Norman, M.D., secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. Bell re-emphasized the importance of community partnerships and furthering these conversations to reach solutions. Norman wrapped up the convening by driving home the need for creativity and innovation to solve problems around the state.

## Next Steps

As Kansas continues to undergo demographic change, it is essential to identify the challenges and opportunities of aging and diverse populations and ensure that existing systems, policies and programs are prepared to meet them. Data from the County Health Rankings can help stakeholders understand the health status of their communities and make decisions that adapt to changing needs.

### KANSAS HEALTH INSTITUTE

The Kansas Health Institute supports effective policymaking through nonpartisan research, education and engagement. KHI believes evidence-based information, objective analysis and civil dialogue enable policy leaders to be champions for a healthier Kansas. Established in 1995 with a multiyear grant from the Kansas Health Foundation, KHI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization based in Topeka.

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