

# PRESS RELEASE

## **Integrated Care Approach Focuses on All Facets of Patient Health**

*Kansas safety net clinics evaluate options to integrate primary medical and behavioral health care*

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Topeka, Kan. — Studies show that individuals with serious mental illness have higher rates of chronic medical conditions such as high blood pressure, asthma and diabetes. Patients with a mental illness also have costlier care than those without a mental health diagnosis. To address these outcomes, providers across the country have experimented with new ways to integrate primary medical care with behavioral health care.

In 2013, the [Sunflower Foundation](#) provided grants to Kansas safety net providers seeking to integrate traditional primary care with behavioral health care, which includes mental health and substance use disorder services. The Sunflower Foundation contracted with the Kansas Health Institute (KHI) to study the grantees' successes and challenges of providing integrated care to patients. The resulting issue brief, [Integrating Primary Medical and Behavioral Health Care](#), identifies barriers to successful care integration, including reimbursement, licensing, data and workforce issues, as well as potential solutions to these barriers.

“Safety net providers have modeled a variety of ways that care can be provided for the whole person, body and mind,” stated Kari Bruffett, KHI director of policy. “Identifying challenges the Sunflower Foundation grantees have overcome in implementing their models of integrated primary medical and behavioral health care could help policymakers smooth the way for others who want to adopt the practice.”

Funding for this project was provided by the Sunflower Foundation: Health Care for Kansans, a Topeka-based philanthropic organization with a mission to serve as a catalyst for improving the health of Kansans.

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*The Kansas Health Institute delivers credible information and research enabling policy leaders to make informed health policy decisions that enhance their effectiveness as champions for a healthier Kansas. The Kansas Health Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan health policy and research organization based in Topeka that was established in 1995 with a multiyear grant from the Kansas Health Foundation.*