

# Governor's Commission on Racial Equity and Justice

*Improving Racial Equity in Kansas: Examining CREJ Local  
Government Recommendations*

February 10, 2022

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United Methodist Health Ministry Fund

# Agenda

- Introductions
- History and Background
- Process and Timeline
- Recommendations
- Questions

# History and Background

# About the Commission

- The Governor signed Executive Order 20-48 on June 24, 2020, forming the Governor's Commission on Racial Equity and Justice.
- She asked the Commission to study issues of racial equity and justice across systems in Kansas, focusing first on policing and law enforcement.
- The Commission includes perspectives from the criminal justice system, education, healthcare, and advocacy organizations.
- This is **not** a commission on criminal justice reform – it is focused on broad issues of racial equity in Kansas, which includes some elements of the criminal justice system but is not tasked with a comprehensive study of that system.
- In 2021, the Commission focused on studying racial equity within economic systems, education, and healthcare.

# 2020 Report

- The Commission submitted its first report to the Governor on law enforcement and policing on December 1, 2020.
- The report included over 60 recommendations to state agencies, the legislature, and local governments on how to improve racial equity in Kansas around policing.

# 2021 Report

- In studying the initial topic, the Commission heard repeatedly about overlapping and connecting issues in communities of color across the state.
- These issues all connected to the Social Determinants of Health, which became the Commission's focus in 2021.
- Specifically, the Commission broke out into three subcommittees, studying and making recommendations on racial equity and justice in Kansas in:
  - *Economic Systems*
  - *Education*
  - *Healthcare*

# Process and Timeline



# The Commission's Work

- The Commission met every other week from July 2020 through December 2021, hearing from state and national experts, local leaders, and community members about topics important to Kansans.
- Meetings included learning sessions, presentations, and discussion.
- The Commission took information from these meetings and developed recommendations on improving racial equity for state agencies, the legislature, and local governments.
- The Commission also solicited feedback from Kansans via social media.

The Governor's  
Commission on  
Racial Equity and  
Justice wants to  
hear from

**YOU!**

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The Commission's first report includes over 60 recommendations for state agencies, the legislature, and local governments. The recommendations focus on:

- Law Enforcement Training
- Officer Certification and Standards
- Recruitment, Retention, and Promotion
- Accountability
- Data Collection
- Public Defense
- Justice System
- School Resource Officers
- Tribal Jurisdiction
- Immigration and Law Enforcement
- Behavioral Health
- Law Enforcement Funding

The Commission's 2021 report on the Social Determinants of Health includes 90 recommendations focused on the subcommittee subject areas of Education, Economic Systems, and Healthcare:

- Early Childhood and Child Care
- Maximizing Federal Funding
- Tax Policy
- Teacher Diversity
- Post-Secondary Education
- School Resource Officers
- School Mascots
- Maternal and Child Health
- Vaccine Equity
- Universal Equity Policies
- Housing and Homelessness
- Broadband
- Wages and Lending Practices
- Workforce
- Access to Healthcare
- Family Planning
- Behavioral Health
- ACEs and Interfamily Violence
- Juvenile Justice System

2020

Recommendations

# Initial Report: Loacl Recommendations

## **Create plans to recruit officers that reflect the communities being policed.**

Connection to the community and diversity in the force are values that help any law enforcement agency to serve more effectively. Law enforcement agencies that serve in a community should take steps to align their recruitment efforts to the demographics of the communities being served.

## **Include accountability measures and follow up related to the enforcement of recommended changes.**

Any policy changes put in place should be paired with training, management, and accountability measures to ensure they are being implemented as intended.

## **Ensure that data collected is transparent, public, and easily accessible.**

Data collected related to law enforcement recruiting, promotion, pull-overs and use of force should be clear and readily available to members of the public.

## **Mandate review of records during the hiring process.**

Recommend law enforcement agencies be required to check an officer's record with CPOST before making a hiring decision. Additionally, if and when a national database is created, law enforcement agencies should also be required to check that national database.

## **Provide incentive pay for officers who speak languages other than English. Include proficiency testing.**

Kansas law enforcement departments should provide incentive pay for officers who speak languages other than English to improve officer-community interactions, increase accessibility for citizens, and create more representative departments to mirror the communities they police. Consider a partnership with a local community college to test and confirm language proficiency.

# Initial Report: Local Recommendations

**Support and finance the use of mobile crisis response models, including co-responder and virtual co-responder models to assist law enforcement in responding to behavioral health calls and stops.**

Mental health professionals who ride with and work alongside law enforcement officers can contribute to positive outcomes and promote treatment over incarceration for individuals experiencing mental health crisis. Kansas communities should implement appropriate co-responder programs where possible.

**Encourage law enforcement agencies to pursue available grant funding.**

Local law enforcement agencies should pursue available grant funding, from local, state, and federal sources (including community and philanthropic partners) to support reform and improvement efforts.



2021

Recommendations

### *Universal Equity Policies*

**Encourage government policies and enact legislation that requires bias and equity analysis of policy decisions and legislation at all levels.**

Similar to the process of reviewing fiscal notes that inform policymakers about the financial impact of proposed legislation, or requesting economic impact statements on relevant bills, the legislature should adopt a procedure for developing and considering equity analysis and impacts of any policy change).

**Provide language interpretation and translation services so that Kansans have access to their government.**

All government entities in the state should take steps ensure that meetings, offices, and services are available to all of their constituents, regardless of their English language proficiency. This should include translation of documents as well as live interpretation for meetings or conversations, including American Sign Language (ASL).

### *Maximizing Federal Funding*

**Consider the perspectives of people of color and people from groups impacted by COVID-19 in the process of distributing federal relief funds.**

As entities look at implementing direct relief and allocating discretionary funds, they should create structures that bring people of color and communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 to the table where decisions are being made and consider their perspectives.

**Direct federal funds using a broad interpretation of “health” that includes social determinants of health and considers health equity.**

Significant funds from ARPA and other federal relief packages are directed to improving health outcomes. Kansas should consider the definition of “health” to include aspects of the social determinants of health and allocate those funds accordingly. Additionally, health equity should be a primary consideration in the distribution of funds.

## *Housing and Homelessness*

**Explore community land trusts as a path to making homeownership more accessible.**

Community land trusts (CLT) are not-for-profit entities, organized and run by community members, that hold land in a trust for the benefit of the community. Under a CLT model, land may be used for community gardens, affordable housing projects, parks and green spaces, or other initiatives. Through cooperative agreements, CLTs make homeownership achievable for individuals who may not be able to purchase a home through more standard means.

## *Broadband*

**Maintain a perspective that supports equity in the implementation of broadband development.**

State and local governments that are making investments in broadband should ensure that their work centers equity and accessibility for underserved communities.

### *Teacher Diversity*

**Provide flexibility to student teaching programs for non-traditional students who must work and student teach.**

Student teaching requires that candidates spend full days in schools for several months. This model was developed many years ago when most college students were “traditional.” Many of today’s students, including Grow Your Own (GYO) candidates, are non-traditional. They attend college part-time because they are adult heads of households, have one or more jobs, and often have to care for children of their own. Remedies could include different models for student teaching experiences, with more flexibility in scheduling and credit acquisition. The state should create grant programs that districts can access to assist these individuals, and the state and districts should allow student teachers to receive work-study support.

**Districts should create policies that support and protect diversity among students, teachers, and staff.**

Clear policies addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion contribute to an environment that provides the best educational experience for everyone.

### *School Resource Officers*

**If law enforcement is utilized in school districts for any purpose, districts should create sustainable partnerships and formalize MOUs between school districts, law enforcement agencies, and stakeholders.**

A formal agreement between the school district and law enforcement agencies, developed in conversation with other stakeholders, can help ensure clarity between various parties on the intention of the engagement and the guidelines of law enforcement involvement in the educational institution.

### *Juvenile Justice System*

**Eliminate “zero tolerance” policies and promote alternatives to suspensions for discipline such as alternative schools, behavioral interventionists, family case managers, and restorative justice programs.**

Students who are suspended or expelled are more likely to interact with the juvenile and criminal justice system, and these disciplines disproportionately impact students of color. Alternative methods of discipline and treatment that allow students to still access education can provide a more productive response to behavioral issues.

### *Maternal and Child Health*

**Partner with state groups to offer best practices and education for mothers and families during and after pregnancy.**

KDHE should partner with local health departments and school districts to support the use of evidence-based prenatal, postpartum, and parenting programs as a strategy to improve health outcomes and reduce disparities.

### *Vaccine Equity*

**Utilize culturally competent messaging about vaccine efficacy and availability. Make sure materials and communications are available in a variety of languages.**

Communication from state and local governments about vaccines and vaccine availability should be clear, timely and culturally competent. In relation to the COVID-19 vaccine, messages should also highlight that the vaccines are safe, effective, and free, and that individuals who refuse to share personal data will not be turned away from getting a vaccine. Use a variety of media, including social media, ethnic media, traditional media, and mainstream media. Governments can also employ phone banking, door-to-door canvassing, and texting campaigns.

### *Behavioral Health*

**Build relationships between local governments, law enforcement agencies, and other entities to provide robust behavioral services in communities.**

Explore opportunities to develop public private partnerships between local government, law enforcement, health care and community-based organizations to utilize social workers, care coordinators, and other community based mental health providers to address mental health needs and prevent interaction with law enforcement, child welfare and crisis services.

### *ACEs and Interfamily Violence*

**Provide accessible screening of parents and children for behavioral health and development needs.**

Utilize Medicaid contracts and other structures to promote and incentivize screenings. Ensure payment models, quality measures and contract language align to promote universal screening.





GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION  
ON  
RACIAL EQUITY & JUSTICE

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# 2021 REPORT

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH -  
FINAL REPORT

Both commission reports are  
available online at

<https://governor.kansas.gov/governors-commission-on-racial-equity-and-justice/>

Along with recordings of  
meetings and learning  
sessions held by the  
Commission, and documents  
used in development of the  
recommendations.

# Questions?

To contact the Commission:

[KansasCREJ@ks.gov](mailto:KansasCREJ@ks.gov)

# Upcoming Webinar

## **Examining CREJ State/Agency Recommendations**

Thursday, Mar. 10  
Noon – 1 PM

Register at <https://healthfund.org/a/crej-recs-webinars/>