

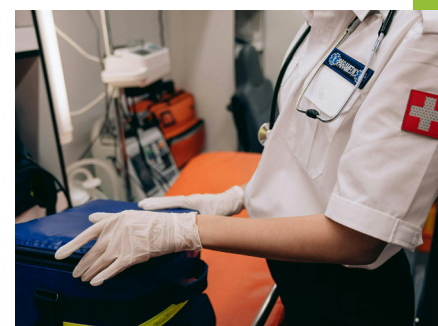
## THE RIGHT CARE, AT THE RIGHT TIME, AT THE RIGHT PLACE.

Paramedics are more than just rescue workers. They're highly trained health care workers who can help fill growing gaps in Kansas' health care system. These gaps are fueled by workforce shortages, health care facility closures and an aging population with increased health needs. As the need for health care is increasing, the access to care is decreasing — especially in our rural communities. However, an emerging health care model, called community paramedicine, can help solve this issue by leveraging the skills of paramedics and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) in new ways. Paramedics already bridge the gap between communities and hospitals. Now, those skills can help fill the gap between communities and the health care system as a whole. They can provide the right care, at the right time, at the right place.

## WHAT IS COMMUNITY PARAMEDICINE?

The community paramedicine health care model utilizes trained paramedics and EMTs to provide a broad range of non-emergency services outside of a hospital and in a person's home. Emergency medical professionals are well-positioned to work in this capacity, as they are accustomed to entering patients' homes, navigating changing and dynamic situations, and quickly building rapport and trust. Additionally, the skill sets used while treating emergency situations often translate to non-emergency services.

The goal of this care model is to expand access to care, improve patient outcomes and increase health care system efficiency. Community paramedics can provide both primary care and community coordination services conveniently in a person's home.



### PRIMARY CARE

- ✓ In-home post-discharge care
- ✓ Chronic disease management
- ✓ Fall assessment and prevention
  - ✓ Blood-pressure checks
  - ✓ Immunizations
- ✓ In-home electrocardiograms and ultrasounds
  - ✓ Blood draws
  - ✓ Health education
- ✓ Medication reconciliation

### COMMUNITY COORDINATION

- ✓ Facilitate telemedicine appointments
- ✓ Connect patients with mental health providers
- ✓ Share social service resources, such as for the unhoused
- ✓ Connect patients with local food banks

Some community paramedicine programs employ a multidisciplinary team of health care professionals, in addition to first responders, as part of a full mobile integrated health care delivery team. This team-based model can include nurse practitioners, physicians, community health workers and more in order to ensure patients receive the level of care they require. Together, they can address health care needs, prevent emergencies and help alleviate strain on hospital emergency departments.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Emergency medical professionals already provide services in non-emergency situations. In 2022, nearly 70% of EMS responses within the National Emergency Medical Services Information System were categorized as non-emergent and didn't require an immediate response.

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## WHO DO COMMUNITY PARAMEDICS SERVE?

Community paramedicine programs increase the capacity of the health care team by using an existing workforce to expand care and meet patients where they are at – in their home or a community setting. Patients can receive timely care without having to travel or even leave their homes. By empowering these paramedics and first responders to use their expertise in a new way, it creates an opportunity to provide care for populations that otherwise may be underserved. These populations can include:



- Patients with chronic disease
- People living in remote or rural areas
- People who have difficulty leaving their homes
- Elderly or frail adults who have an increased fall risk
- Tribal populations

## GROWING GAPS IN CARE

BY THE #

**58%** OF KANSAS HOSPITALS ARE AT RISK OF CLOSING

**47** LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES CLOSED IN JUST TWO YEARS

**17%** OF KANSANS ARE 65+

**18,000** REGISTERED NURSES NEEDED TO MEET DEMAND

Kansas is facing growing gaps in its health care system due to a variety of factors. When there are gaps in care, it can cause missed opportunities for preventive care and delay diagnoses. That, in turn, can result in preventable hospitalizations and increased health care costs. It also can worsen existing health conditions, reduce the quality of life and create overall poorer health outcomes.

### WORKFORCE SHORTAGES

Kansas faces a severe shortage of health care workers. The Kansas Department of Labor estimated the state will need more than 28,000 nursing assistants, 18,000 registered nurses and 6,000 home health aides this year to meet the demand. These workforce shortages drive up the salaries of available professionals, putting further pressure on facilities to cut costs by eliminating services or declining to take new patients.



### FACILITY CLOSURES

Additionally, an alarming number of rural community hospitals and long-term care facilities are closing or are at risk of closing. More than half of Kansas' rural hospitals are currently at risk of closing. Between the start of the pandemic and late 2022, 47 long-term

care facilities closed or reduced services in Kansas, according to LeadingAge Kansas. And, most of the remaining long-term facilities closed wings or units due to staffing shortages.

### AGING POPULATION

All of this is occurring at a time when Kansas' population is aging and needs more care. The percentage of over-65 Kansans grew from 13 to 17% between 2012 and 2022. By 2039, it's projected to constitute nearly a quarter of all Kansans.

### SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

In addition to these challenges, other factors can also create gaps in care. These include:

- Lack of transportation or access to public transportation
- Longer distances to travel, especially in rural areas
- Lack of patient engagement or adherence to treatment plans
- Financial constraints, education level and environmental conditions, as well as other social determinants of health

### FILLING THE GAPS

Community paramedics can use their skills to augment the care team and help close these gaps in care. They can provide the right care, at the right time, at the right place to improve lives and reduce the demand on limited care facilities and providers.

**Community paramedicine is a common-sense approach that addresses health care shortages, produces better health outcomes for patients and creates a more efficient system for all of us.**

LEARN MORE: <https://healthfund.org/a/community-paramedicine>