



2021

YEAR IN REVIEW



DEAR FRIENDS,

As we reflect on the highlights of another challenging year, it is important to celebrate where we have been and the important partnerships that we have forged to improve health. In 2021, the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund (Health Fund) celebrated its 35th anniversary and the milestone of investing more than \$75 million into improving the health and wholeness of Kansans since its inception.

These two milestones reflect our strong relationships across Kansas in health care, early childhood development, and United Methodist churches. This is a celebration of the more than 850 organizations impacted and 2,800 projects supported to date. Together, our board members, staff, and partners will continue to address the social and economic forces affecting the overall health of Kansans.

In 2021, we continued to support Kansans and Great Plains United Methodist Conference churches during year two of a global pandemic. Working across strategic program areas, we developed the [Faith in Vaccines](#) sermon guide to equip faith leaders and partners with important messages and resources to overcome concerns about vaccine efficacy and to meet their family, friends and neighbors with open and empathetic messages about the importance of being vaccinated. The guide was accessed nationally to help address vaccine hesitancy. Our rural public awareness campaign featuring [Dr. Robert Kraft](#) and [Father Robert Schremmer](#) resulted in hard-to-reach populations becoming more willing to be vaccinated.

The pandemic has challenged our health and child care systems. To better inform programming and policy discussions, we have continued to invest in important research to understand how [child care providers](#) are navigating the pandemic as well as continuing to understand how health care providers and patients experience [telehealth](#) and how telehealth can be improved and sustained.

To meet the needs of our Healthy Congregations churches, we held two Mental Health First Aid trainings and released the [Journey Toward Mental Wellness](#) sermon guide and toolkit to help faith leaders begin meaningful conversations on the importance of mental wellness.

As we begin a new year, we are hosting a [series of webinars](#) on the Governor's Commission on Racial Equity and Justice's recommendations, are preparing to launch a series of new [sermon guides](#) addressing social determinants of health and are continuing to invest in community-based solutions to improve health. We are thankful for our ongoing partnerships and look forward to continuing to work together in 2022.

Sincerely

David Jordan,
President





ACCESS TO CARE

Maximizing Federal Dollars to Improve Health Services in Kansas

Kansas ranks near the bottom of states nationally when it comes to bringing federal dollars back to the state, negatively impacting our ability to deliver and sustain services.

In 2021, the Health Fund partnered with community-based organizations in rural Kansas to help support federal grant efforts aimed at sustaining mental health services and increasing health care insurance outreach and enrollment. This resulted in \$15 million in federal grants that will help sustain health care services in Kansas.

As part of this effort, [Thrive Allen County](#) received a multi-year grant to develop a statewide consumer outreach and assistance program to boost enrollment in health insurance statewide and four community mental health centers received grants to improve access to behavioral health services.

Thrive utilizes trained Navigators to help consumers find and apply for Marketplace



Thrive Allen County Navigator (courtesy)

coverage. The grant will support the recruitment, training and activities of 18 Navigators who will serve 42 counties and ten agencies across Kansas.

Spring River Mental Health & Wellness, Inc. in Riverton, Pawnee Mental Health Services in Manhattan, and Southeast Kansas Mental Health Center in Humboldt received Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Community Mental Health Center (CMHC) grant awards. CMHCs provide prevention, treatment and rehabilitation mental health services. The grant dollars are intended to increase access to mental health and behavioral support.

Protecting the Future of Rural Health in Kansas

Over the last decade, the Health Fund has worked in partnership with the Kansas Hospital Association and partners to envision innovative delivery models to sustain rural health care, including development of a new delivery model.

In late 2020, Congress passed a rural emergency hospital model which allows rural hospitals to convert to standalone emergency rooms and outpatient centers. In 2021, Kansas became the first state to pass the model. This state and federal legislation will enable Kansas to pilot the innovation model developed over the last decade.

The Health Fund and its partners will resume [community conversations](#) about the future of

According to the Kansas Hospital Association:

10

[COUNTIES IN KANSAS LACK A HOSPITAL](#)

68

[% OF KANSAS HOSPITALS ARE IN A RURAL AREA](#)

rural health in Kansas and will look for hospitals and communities who want to participate in the rural emergency hospital model, which will help create a more sustainable health care approach in Kansas communities.



EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT



Gwen Whittit and Cara Gerhardt

High 5 For Mom & Baby Changes

Breastfeeding best practices help ensure babies get a healthy start to life. That's why we developed and fund [High 5 for Mom & Baby](#).

After 10 years as the program coordinator, Gwen Whittit retired at the end of 2021. Through Gwen's leadership and support from the Kansas Breastfeeding Workgroup, High 5 has flourished into a robust program for maternity care facilities to improve infant and maternal health outcomes. There are now 30 High 5 for Mom & Baby facilities and ten High 5 for Mom & Baby Premier facilities.

Cara Gerhardt—a registered nurse and international board certified lactation consultant—is the new coordinator, bringing more than 10 years of experience.

2021 Kansas breastfeeding successes:

8th 

IN NATION IN NUMBER OF BABIES BORN IN [BABY-FRIENDLY HOSPITALS](#) (51.5%)

83 

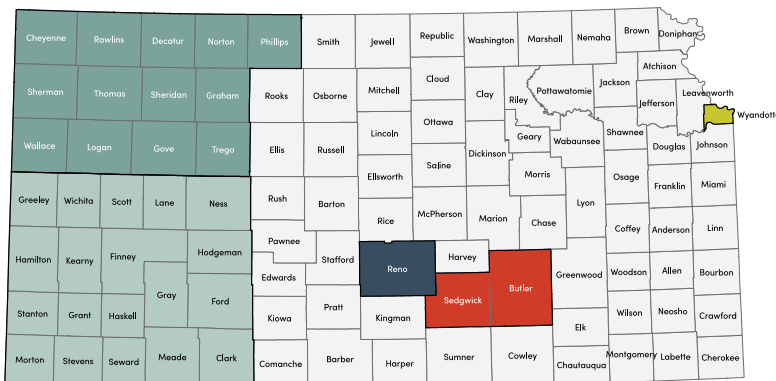
OF 100 ON [2020 mPINC SURVEY](#) MEASURING HOSPITAL NEWBORN CARE PRACTICES ([2018: SCORED 79](#))

43 

INTERNATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED LACTATION CONSULTANTS CERTIFIED TO DATE WITH HEALTH FUND SUPPORT

ABC Shows Promise Across State and Cultures

Kansas ABC Early Childhood Initiative Service Areas 2017-2020



- LiveWell Northwest Kansas
- Russell Child Development Center
- Horizons Mental Health Center
- Rainbows United
- Project Eagle

[The Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up \(ABC\) intervention](#) is a ten-week evidence-based parenting intervention for caregivers of infants and toddlers who have experienced early adversity.

From May 2017 through April 2020, a group of foundations led by the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund brought ABC to five sites across Kansas to evaluate its effectiveness when integrated into the existing array of early childhood programs.

Over three years, 536 families were screened for toxic stress across 36 counties, 402 families were enrolled in ABC, and 682 caregivers and 907 children were impacted.

After completing ABC, caregivers' knowledge, and beliefs in their caregiving abilities, increased. Families reported statistically significant improvements in their children's social emotional functioning, which can lead to improved school readiness.

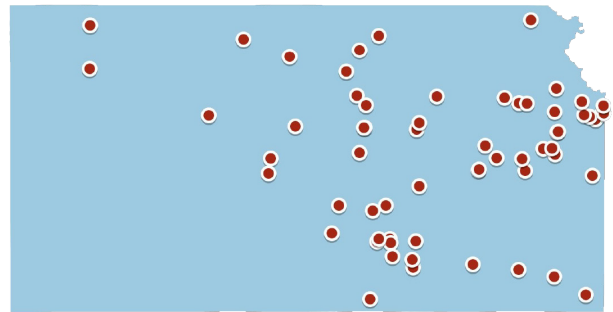
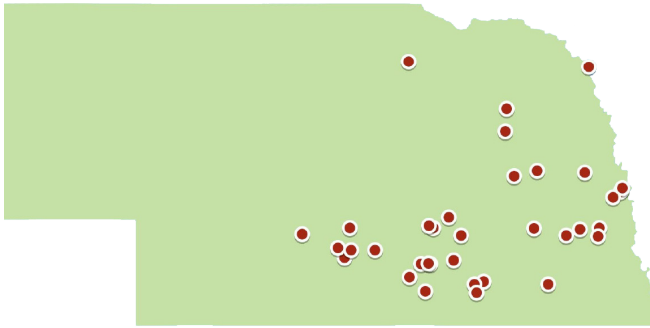
Approximately 41% of families served were Hispanic or Latino, and 22% primarily spoke Spanish in the home. Findings were similar across families receiving ABC in Spanish or English.



HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS

2020-2021 Healthy Congregations Churches

Our [Healthy Congregations](#) program engages Great Plains United Methodist churches in projects to improve spiritual, physical, social, and emotional health in their congregations and communities. The program provides training, resources, and financial support to churches committed to health ministry.



Nebraska Healthy Congregations

- 36 Active or Training Churches
- Largest participating church membership: Kearney First UMC (2,255)
- Elm Creek UMC has been active 8 years

Kansas Healthy Congregations

- 62 Active or Training Churches
- Smallest participating church membership: Ottawa Union Chapel UMC (13)
- 7 churches have been active for 13 years

Special Grant Interest Increases During Pandemic

We funded seven special grant opportunities for Healthy Congregations churches to address social determinants of health, including grants focused on increasing access to healthy food, civic engagement, and neighborng. Interest in the special grants increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Colby UMC, Kansas

Colby United Methodist Church partnered with the local college and library to start a Bike Share in a Box. College students checked out the bikes more than 80 times in the first few months.



Hutchinson First UMC, Kansas

Hutchinson First United Methodist Church partnered with the local parks department to plant their Giving Grove of apple and pear trees. The city will help with orchard upkeep. The church held a ceremony to bless the trees.



HEALTH FUND NEWS



Dashinika Poindexter, Kristine Dean, Lindsey Fields, David Jordan, Katie Schoenhoff, Jeff Gamber

President Selected as Fellow, Staff Grows by One

David Jordan, the Health Fund’s president and CEO, was selected to be part of the National Rural Health Association’s 2022 class of [Rural Health Fellows](#). This is a competitive program, and David’s recognition is well-deserved.

The 17 fellows will participate in the yearlong, intensive program aimed at developing leaders who can articulate a clear and compelling vision for rural America. The NRHA is a nonprofit organization working to improve the health and wellbeing of rural Americans and provide leadership on rural health issues through advocacy, communications, education, and research.

The Health Fund staff grew by one last year with the addition of Lindsey Fields as the communications officer.

Health Fund Thanks Retiring Director, Welcomes New Directors

Our volunteer Board of Directors provides wisdom and guidance that are key to our ability to improve the health of all Kansans. We are fortunate to have a diverse, talented and engaged Board. In 2021, we thanked retiring board member Morita Truman for her dedicated service and commitment to the health of Kansans. We welcomed two new directors—Jee Sook Gil and Yolanda White-Oliver—to the board.



“I completed a Master’s of Public Health because I had a passion for supporting people and children suffering from hunger and disease... God called me as a minister to serve people in the

church and community. I want to become an instrument to connect people to improve their health and connect people to have the right relationship with God. Therefore, it is my honor and joy to serve as one of UMHMF’s board members.”

-Jee Sook Gil



“I am excited to join the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund because it supports initiatives that resonate with me. As a bi-vocational pastor and medical real estate broker, providing the

church with resources for healthy congregation education and programming gives churches another tangible way to be reliable resources and serve their communities.”

-Yolanda White-Oliver

Rainbows United Receives Janet Sevier Gilbreath Award

Each year, the Health Fund board selects one outstanding grant-funded project to receive the [Janet Sevier Gilbreath award](#), named in honor of our first board chairperson. The award recognizes a project which has done the most to advance the Fund's and Janet's vision of health for all Kansans and demonstrates scale, achievement, leveraging, operational excellence, social justice and diversity.



L to R: Audra Kenneson, Mental Health Coordinator; Cindie Silmon, Mental Health Specialist (ABC Home Visitor); Leslie Stevens, Mental Health Specialist (ABC Home Visitor); Deb Voth, President; Debbie Mai, Former Vice President of Programs and Services

[Rainbows United, Inc.](#), Wichita, received the 2020 award for its participation in the Kansas Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) Initiative, supporting implementation of an evidence-based home visiting model to build attachment and mitigate the effects of toxic stress in young children.

“Over the five years of providing this service, we have been fortunate to see firsthand the positive impact of early intervention mental health services in the lives of the families we serve,” said Audra Kenneson, Rainbows’ mental health coordinator. “As one of our ABC home visitors reported about a child who initially showed anger and frustration while seldom going to his mother for help, ‘Through the mom’s hard work, this little guy is more engaged and bonded with her. When he is upset he goes to her for comfort and he does not get mad at things as easily as when he first began the program.’ The big success was when the mom reported, ‘He enjoys playing with me, now!’”

Dr. Christine Fisher, 2021 Recipient of the Kim Moore Visionary Leadership Award

Each year we honor the visionary leadership of our founding president by recognizing a [visionary leader](#) in one of our strategic focus areas. For 2021, we awarded the honor to Dr. Christine Fisher, medical director of First Care Clinic, Inc. (FCC) in Hays, for her work in advancing access to care in Kansas.

Dr. Fisher has integrated behavioral health into the medical practice at FCC. She has also added TRUE Health peer learning classes to bring individuals together that have similar chronic diseases and provide education from medical and behavioral health professionals with the goal of participants improving their lifestyle through behavior changes.



Dr. Fisher has redefined how medical care is delivered at FCC by implementing a nurse closer who completes any needed follow-up services with the patient before they leave and recaps all instructions and next steps. This has increased patient satisfaction and the nurses’ job satisfaction.

As a result of Dr. Fisher’s leadership, FCC’s quality of care indicators were ranked in the top ten percent of health centers nationally during the 2020 calendar year. The changes implemented by Dr. Fisher through her leadership have made a positive impact on many northwest Kansas residents.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

2021 BY THE NUMBERS

35

YEARS SERVING THE
HEALTH OF KANSANS

\$75

MILLION GRANT DOLLARS
INVESTED SINCE 1986

850

ORGANIZATIONAL GRANT
RECIPIENTS SINCE 1986

133 GRANTS

13 ACCESS TO CARE
22 EARLY CHILDHOOD DEV.
93 HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS
5 OTHER

\$1.78

MILLION GRANT
DOLLARS AWARDED

\$792

THOUSAND EXTERNAL
DOLLARS OF FUNDING
LEVERAGED ACROSS ALL
PROGRAM AREAS