

PUBLIC HEALTH 3.0

Kansas City,
Missouri

Highlights



June 21, 2016

As part of the implementation of Public Health 3.0, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH) is hosting a series of listening sessions to learn about the challenges and opportunities experienced by local public health entities in their work to promote healthier communities.

The meetings also spotlight local public health innovations, creating a valuable opportunity for community leaders to collaborate and develop strategies to improve public health going forward. Below you'll find highlights from the Kansas City meeting, which took place on June 21, 2016.

Public Health Infrastructure

The [Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services \(DHSS\)](#) governs public health at the state level in Missouri. DHSS provides funding, technical support, laboratory services, and other assistance to 115 local public health agencies that operate independently from state and federal agencies.

Kansas City, MO, has its own public health department, the [Kansas City Health Department \(KCHD\)](#). KCHD has been working for 150 years to protect residents from public health threats and save lives through prevention. KCHD works directly with DHSS through contracts for services and programs.

Missouri also has the first voluntary state accreditation system for local public health departments — KCHD was accredited under that system in June of 2004.

What is Public Health 3.0?

Public Health 3.0 is a challenge to business leaders, community leaders, state lawmakers, and federal policymakers to incorporate health into all areas of governance.

Kansas City Area Fast Facts

Counties: 22

Population: 2,070,221

Median Income: \$56,994

Median Age: 37.1

Sources:

- Mid-America Regional Council
- 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate



Health Problems and Challenges

Kansas City faces many geographic and racial health disparities.

A [2015 Regional Health Care Assessment](#) for the Greater Kansas City area found that health outcomes were worse in urban counties due to limited access to health care and environmental factors related to urban living.

Social factors also affect certain neighborhoods in Kansas City disproportionately — problems like violence, structural racism, and economic injustice have contributed to decreased life expectancy in some neighborhoods.

Additionally, racial minority populations face health inequalities, especially around access to quality care. This translates to higher infant mortality rates, lower birth rates, and more preventable hospitalizations for blacks, Hispanics, and Asians.

Health Outcomes

The leading causes of death in the Kansas City area are heart disease and cancer. Other major causes of death in the region include diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, stroke, and suicide. While rates for most of the leading causes of death have declined in recent years, death rates for Alzheimer's disease and suicide are on the rise.

A Culture of Health

In 2015, Kansas City won a [Culture of Health prize](#) from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). The prize honors and supports communities across the country that are working toward better health. RWJF specifically encourages awardees to form strategic partnerships to better serve their community — a key principle of Public Health 3.0.

RWJF selects up to 10 communities each year to receive the prize.

The criteria for winning the prize include:

- Defining health in the broadest possible terms
- Committing to sustainable systems changes and policy-oriented long-term solutions
- Cultivating a shared and deeply held belief in the importance of equal opportunity for health

“Until we ultimately look at the societal level and inherent things like structural racism and privilege, we won't get where we need to go.”

– Rex Archer, Kansas City Health Department

- Harnessing the collective power of leaders, partners, and community members
- Securing and making the most of available resources
- Measuring and sharing progress and results

Kansas City was recognized for its comprehensive approach to improving health. For example, the city has initiatives designed to address social factors that influence health, including reducing violence, fighting predatory payday lending, and improving literacy.

Bright Spots of Innovation

There are a number of programs and initiatives in motion addressing social factors to improve health and quality of life in Kansas City. For example:

- In 2011, the Kansas City Health Commission held a series of interactive meetings with different sectors across the community, including churches, non-profits, and hospitals. These meetings informed a 5-year [Community Health Improvement Plan \(KC-CHIP\)](#) focused on ensuring 3 things: access to care when ill, information on preventive care messages, and an understanding that health starts in one's communities, not at the doctor's office.
- The [Aim4Peace](#) initiative aims to reduce the spread of violence using a preventive approach. Aim4Peace believes that violence can be cured, and that reducing exposure to violence can break the cycle. The initiative works with high-risk populations through conflict resolution training, anti-gun violence courses for first-time offenders, and classes for parents.
- [Communities Creating Opportunity \(CCO\)](#) is a faith-based organization that works with KCHD to improve quality of life in communities across Kansas City. CCO focuses mainly on socioeconomic issues like access to fair credit, predatory lending, and increasing wages.

"Collaboration is contributing to a much better impact than any one of us could accomplish working alone."

*– Susan Mosier,
Kansas Department of Health
and Environment*



Cross-Sector Partnerships

Public Health 3.0 brings together leaders from all sectors that impact health. Kansas City showcases the value of partnerships like these in their successful initiatives. For example:

- [Healthy KC](#) — a partnership between the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas City, and other regional health organizations — launched the [Tobacco 21|KC](#) initiative to increase the minimum age for sale and purchase of tobacco products from 18 to 21. Tobacco21 ordinances have resulted in 1,000 fewer smokers each year.
- Since 2001, KCHD has partnered with Cerner Corporation, a leader in health information technology. Cerner sees the potential in the intersection of population health and public health, and is working with local groups like [Truman Medical Centers](#) and [Lewis & Clark Information Exchange](#) to improve health outcomes.
- The [Double Up Food Bucks](#) program gives low-income residents incentives to use their food assistance dollars to buy fresh produce at farmers markets. The foundation worked with several partners to expand this program to 160 grocery stores and 68 farmers markets.

Regional Highlights

Other areas across the region are implementing innovative programs to improve health outcomes in their communities, including:

- The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) is partnering with the March of Dimes to join their [Becoming a Mom](#) program, designed to help improve birth outcomes.
- The [Douglas County Food Policy Council](#) has made great strides in improving access to healthy foods in their communities. Some of their work includes developing a food hub so institutional buyers (like schools and hospitals) can purchase produce in bulk from local farmers, creating school gardens, and implementing a SNAP matching program for farmers markets.



- The [Oklahoma City County Health Department \(OCCHD\)](#) is working with [MyHealth Access Network](#), Oklahoma's largest health information exchange, to improve access to real-time data. This data allows professionals to do things like respond to inappropriate emergency department visits and distribute resources where they're needed most.

Existing Data Resources

Data collection is an important component of developing and implementing effective public health interventions. In Kansas City:

- The Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City's [KCHealthMatters Community Health Data and Resources](#) collects data on health indicators and disparities across the Greater Kansas City region.
- The [Mid-America Regional Council](#) provides data on population, economic, and social indicators for the Greater Kansas City region.

Looking to the Future

Leaders from the Kansas City area plan to continue their efforts to foster creative, productive partnerships between sectors that impact health and quality of life. For example:

- Expanding data analysis and quality assurance is a priority moving forward. Increased access to good quality data will allow KCHD and other organizations to better assess their community's health and advocate for funding for important programs and initiatives.
- Ensuring that programs addressing societal-level factors affecting health, like CCO and Aim4Peace, continue to reach communities to create safer, healthier environments.
- Continuing to address the upstream community and policy-level issues to address social factors that contribute to poor health outcomes.

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