



Government & Community Relations

2023 REPORT



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At Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas (BCBSKS), we've worked for more than 80 years to provide peace of mind and access to a better quality of life. Where health care used to focus solely on the physical care received from providers, clinics and hospitals, now it focuses on the entirety of a person's health journey and the many factors that play a part. And that's an integral part of the work we do in the Government and Community Relations Division.

As the primary contact with public policymakers, government officials, regulators and community partners, the work of the Government and Community Relations team includes overseeing the company's position as good corporate citizens through corporate giving, community partnerships and initiatives that improve the health of Kansans.

As a not-for-profit, mutually-owned health insurance company, we operate for the benefit of the public good. We don't have shareholders to pay or stock prices to worry about and that allows us to keep our focus on simply doing what's right for our members and our communities, both today and in the future.

The past year was exciting, full of new ways to engage with Kansans and adding a stronger health equity focus for our team. This work wouldn't have been possible without community partners like you. I look forward to what we are able to accomplish together in the coming years.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sunee Mickle".

Sunee Mickle

Vice President, Government and Community Relations

Value & Community Impact



17,813,671 claims processed



\$3,070,063,943 paid to providers



\$53,639,772 paid in taxes

In 2022, 88.63% of every premium dollar went to member care.¹

As a member-owned, not-for-profit company, 1% of your premium dollar goes to taxes² and 10% goes to operate our business. These administrative fees include general business operations to serve you, our groups and members, and to ensure financial stability so we are there when you need us. These administrative fees are some of the lowest, nationally, for a health insurer.

Taxes paid by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas support local, state and federal social services and programs, including education, health care, transportation, social security, corrections, veterans and other vital public services.



¹ Member care includes the following claims: hospital, facility, healthcare provider, drug and dental claims. Claims expense allocation is based off of 2022 paid claims.

² Taxes include payroll, federal and state income, personal property, real estate and premium tax and exchange fees for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas and its subsidiaries.

Government Relations



Government Relations

Government Relations

The Government and Community Relations division serves as the company's primary contact with policymakers. As the largest health insurance provider in Kansas, we serve our members at the Kansas Statehouse through:



Dependability – As trusted experts in health insurance information for all Kansans, we work with the Kansas Legislature to provide accurate and reliable information.



Courage – Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas (BCBSKS) was appointed by the Kansas Legislature and Kansas Insurance Commissioner to lead and participate in efforts to shape a 10-year strategic plan to modernize the state's behavioral health system.



Integrity – BCBSKS is leading a movement to give Kansans a health care system that works – one that they can trust, understand and afford. As part of our work to help make health care more affordable, we partner with the Kansas Legislature to educate lawmakers on the true cost implications of policy proposals.

As the most trusted health insurance provider in Kansas, our team serves members at the Kansas Statehouse.



Leadership and Innovation

Guided by our mission of being the insurer that Kansans trust with their health, the following are areas of focus for BCBSKS.



Integrity: Affordability

Health care costs affect everyone, including individual patients, employers and providers. Our focus is on affordability, and we are committed to finding new, creative ways to connect our members with high-quality care at a lower cost.

Innovation

Health is impacted by many things that happen outside of a doctor's office, including diet, exercise, tobacco use and more. Poor diet can result in conditions like diabetes and cardiovascular disease, which require expensive medical care and result in higher health care costs for all. Through Blue Health Initiatives, we're helping communities create sustainable change to prevent disease. We've funded Food as Medicine programs in Geary, Harvey and Riley counties to help integrate nutrition into our health care system and remove barriers to healthier foods.

To help our members afford prescription medications, we've partnered with CivicaScript, a program dedicated to making quality, generic medicines like insulin more affordable and available to everyone. We're also proud to partner with a pharmacy benefit manager, Prime Therapeutics, that is focused on helping non-profit health plans obtain access to medications at an affordable price. Because BCBSKS is a mutual insurance company that operates like a non-profit health plan, we pass along those savings to our members.

Health Education

Our case managers work with members and their health care team to coordinate services to meet the member's needs in a quality and cost-effective way. They facilitate access to in-network providers, assist with discharge management and help connect the member with community resources to aid in their recovery.

What providers are saying:

“I love working with the folks at Blue Cross – I am amazed at how they are always thinking about what patients need.”

– Michelle, Newton Medical Center Health



Growth and Progress: Mental Health

To better connect Kansans with affordable, in-network mental health care, we partnered with MiResource, an online mental health provider referral tool, in October 2021. We recognize the need for timely mental health care, including preventive care, and are focused on improving access to those critical services.

Since Oct. 2021, BCBSKS members have used MiResource to conduct more than

73,050

unique searches and make more than

6,291 unique appointments.



Dependability: Telehealth

BCBSKS began covering telemedicine services in 1993, recognizing early the potential of technology to increase health care access and affordability for all Kansans.

We carefully designed our telehealth benefit to ensure it would not displace health care providers in rural Kansas communities and to encourage members to continue coordinating care through their local primary care physicians.

Kansans want the convenience of seeking care when they need it and how they need it. As part of our efforts to reduce barriers to care, behavioral health providers now receive 105% reimbursement from BCBSKS for their delivery of telehealth services. Additionally, BCBSKS permanently expanded the types of medically appropriate visits allowed via telehealth – including e-visits, virtual hospice services, and speech and occupational therapy. Supporting telehealth helps ensure sustainable access to care in rural areas of our state, without compromising the quality-of-care BCBSKS members receive.

95.9% of all telehealth claims have been paid to Kansas providers.



Courage: Health Equity

We are focused on improving health outcomes for all Kansans, which requires courage to try new ideas and take risks.

We are committed to identifying disparities in health outcomes across our state, wherever they may occur. This includes looking for ways to improve access to quality care for both rural and urban residents. Better health outcomes benefit all Kansans and help control health care costs.

We are working in all areas of this strategic framework to:

- Analyze data that measures disparities.
- Scale effective programs.
- Work with providers to improve outcomes.
- Lean into partnerships at the community level.



Sunee Mickle

Vice President, Government and Community Relations



Sarah Fertig

Director, Government Relations

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The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Foundation



Tomburg State University
Foundation, Inc.
Honors
Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Kansas
Foundation
With Membership in the
President Society
as a
University Fellow
2022

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The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Foundation



The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Foundation has been promoting the good health of Kansans since 2005 by providing financial support for initiatives that focus on the key health issues impacting the lives of Kansans.

It is the Foundation's goal to improve the health and well-being across the communities we serve.

The Foundation has five main funding pillars:

- Health improvement
- Community health access and health education
- Healthy behaviors
- Prevention initiatives
- Direct health services to the uninsured



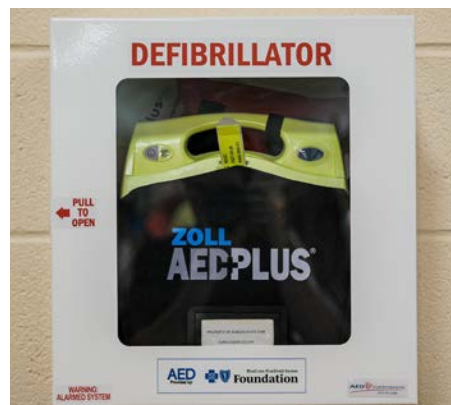


Scope of Giving

Since 2005, over \$10.2 million has been provided to initiatives that create a healthier future for all Kansans. The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Foundation focuses on funding initiatives that address health and wellness, mental and behavioral health and health equity initiatives.

Over **\$10.2 million** has been provided to initiatives that create a healthier future for all Kansans.

In 2023,
more than
\$767,000
was awarded to
202
organizations.



Grant Spotlights

KU School of Medicine – Wichita (Statewide)

\$100,000

Foundation funding helped launch a fellowship program in child and adolescent psychiatry. With a critical shortage of psychologists across Kansas to help children living with mental health challenges, this program will help more children receive the help they need, enhance knowledge for other health professionals and help stop the long-term effects of untreated mental health issues.



“I have been so impressed by the support from everyone in the community for this program. It will change so many lives and relieve so much suffering. We are very grateful to BCBSKS Foundation; we have been able to start the fellowship ahead of our plans with their support.”

– Rachel Brown, MBBS, Professor and Chair of Psychiatry and Behavioral Services for KU School of Medicine-Wichita

First Tee of Kansas (Statewide)

\$30,000

Foundation funding supported First Tee of Kansas, covering 18 Kansas counties. Funds helped purchase equipment, paid golf course fees and provided assistance to families that couldn't afford the program fees. First Tee is more than just a sports program – it empowers youth to be the best version of themselves. By integrating the game of golf with life skills curriculum, they create learning experiences that build inner strength, self-confidence and resilience that kids carry to everything they do.





Healthy Habits for Life

Healthy Habits for Life is a major grant-giving program of the Foundation for schools. It is offered to help schools fund physical and mental health initiatives for students in kindergarten through grade 12.

In 2023, a total of **110**
grants were given, totaling

\$196,797

in funding for healthy initiatives
for students.

“Through Healthy Habits for Life, we have been able to enrich our students’ learning and offer enhanced programs for them. The goal is to always give our students the tools and knowledge they need to make positive choices now that will help guide their futures. These grants have been a huge blessing to our students and I am so appreciative of the opportunities they have provided.”

-Heather DeMaranville, Nurse, Tonganoxie Public Schools



Marlou Wegener

Chief Operating Officer
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Foundation

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Scan to learn more.

Community Relations



Community Relations



Kansans Serving Kansans

In 2023, our organization made significant investments across Kansas through volunteer efforts, employee giving campaigns, local partnerships and continued investment in the Shield Against Violent Environments (SAVE) program.

Volunteerism

At Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas (BCBSKS), we believe the best way to help others is to serve others. That's why our employees happily volunteer their time to give back to organizations across the state that serve the most vulnerable members of our communities. Our employees are also heavily involved in their respective communities outside of corporate volunteerism.

Major volunteer projects included:

Junior
Achievement

420
hours

Meals on
Wheels

1,746
hours

Nancy Perry
Day of Caring

300
hours

3,665 hours invested into community projects.



Health-focused Support

Corporate contributions primarily support non-profit organizations in our service area that have a health-related focus. Most of the funding goes to support event sponsorships that benefit area non-profit organizations. The budget prioritizes funding corporate community relations projects and organizations where staff serve as board members. Funding decisions are made by a broad committee of employees.

2023
\$310,200
to 79
organizations



Shield Against Violent Environments (SAVE)

We are committed to providing employees with a safe and healthy workplace where domestic violence will not be tolerated. The Shield Against Violent Environments (SAVE) program, which is in its 22nd year, was implemented to provide employees who have experienced or are currently experiencing a domestic violence situation with resources and assistance.

Through corporate giving, we were able to further support domestic violence survivors and education through supporting the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV) 2023 Advocacy Day and Silent Witness Exhibit, a project that seeks to raise awareness about the impact of sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking in Kansas by honoring victims who have lost their lives to this violence. We also supported Jana's Campaign's Heartland Campus Safety Summit and their fundraiser An Empty Place at the Table. Jana's Campaign works to provide quality educational programming that prevents gender and relationship violence.

United Way Employee Giving Campaign

For more than 50 years, BCBSKS employees have helped to cultivate positive, sustainable change for families in Kansas through their generous donations and partnership with local United Ways across the state. This support includes employee giving, volunteerism, board service, and corporate and Foundation giving.

In 2023, 600 employees contributed **\$184,767**



“When even one person does something good for someone else, it creates a ripple effect that stretches far beyond what we can even imagine. When we’re able to do that united as an organization committed to serving our fellow Kansans, it’s even more special.”

-Mikayla Hermesch, BCBSKS Community Relations Specialist

Spring Giving Campaign

Over the two-year campaign, employees and the company gave nearly \$50,000 to Harvesters and Kansas Food Bank.





American Red Cross Disaster Response

Through a unique partnership with the American Red Cross, we founded a Disaster Response Team (DRT) in 2013. The objective of the DRT is to assist fellow Kansans in need following major disasters, such as tornados, flooding, storms, etc. The team deploys to large scale disasters to provide comfort and care to those impacted. The deployment efforts include: providing shelter, damage assessment, food, emotional support, health services, relief supplies and other forms of support.

On personal time, members of the team may also assist on smaller crises such as house fires and supporting first responders as members of Disaster Action Teams (DAT) in their immediate area.

Disaster Response Organizational Community Response Plan

Following the Andover tornado in April 2022, it became clear that our organization needed a clear, well-thought-out plan for responding to local disasters. A cross-divisional team met and outlined a full plan that includes employee, member, group and community organization support.



“This corporate partnership is one of its kind in our state and is the envy of other chapters throughout our entire enterprise. Simply put, this team makes our humanitarian mission possible.”

– Jane Blocher, Executive Director for the American Red Cross Greater Kansas Area Chapter



Marlou Wegener

Director, Community Relations



Mikayla Hermesch

Community Relations Specialist



Heather Krull

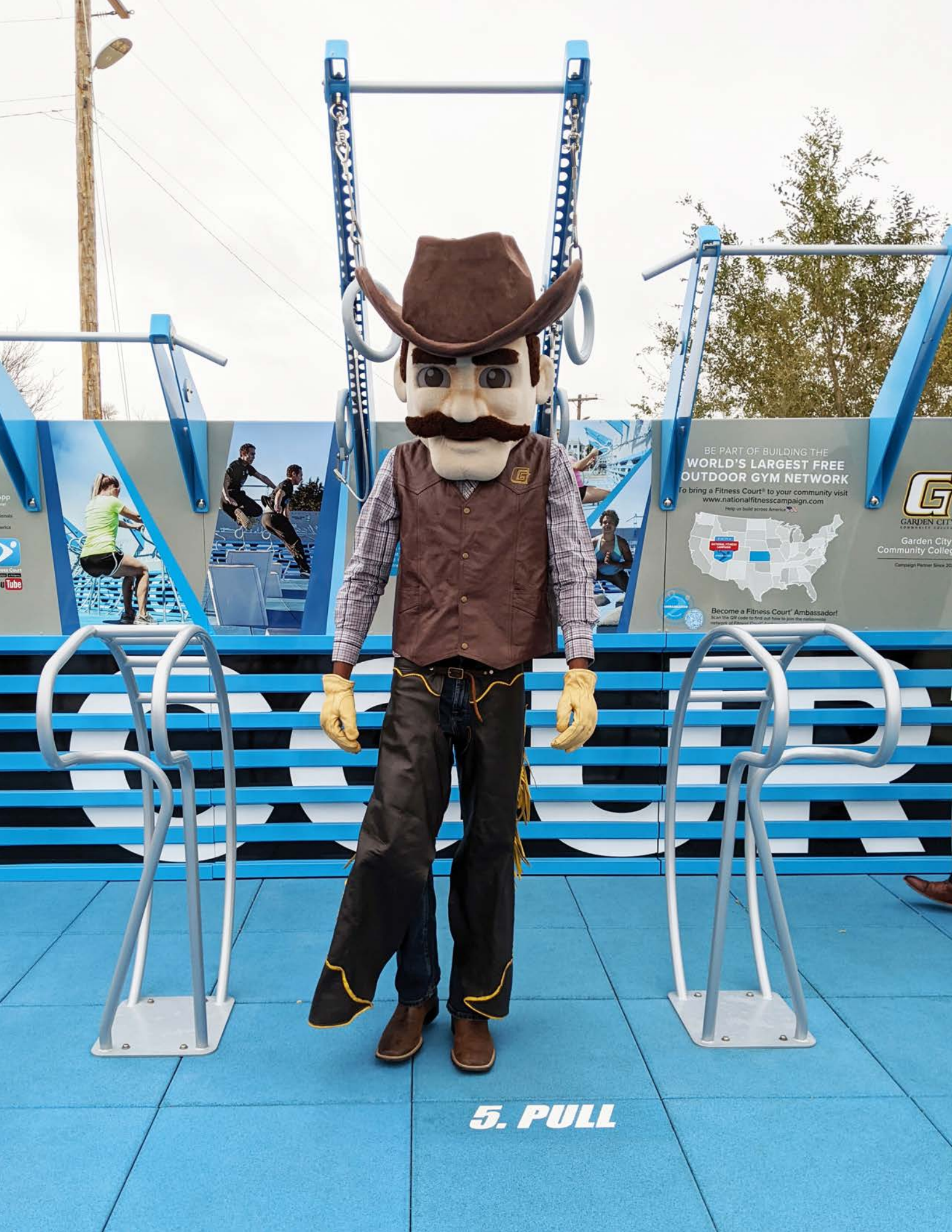
Community Relations Specialist



Scan to learn more.

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Blue Health Initiatives



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5. PULL

Blue Health Initiatives

Transforming Kansas Communities

We are Kansans serving Kansans. By building and strengthening Kansas communities, Blue Health Initiatives works to make Kansas a healthier place to live, work and play. Our core values help guide our work:



Dependability – By providing community coalitions with tools and resources needed, we are helping communities remove barriers to healthy living.



Growth and Progress – Helping to pilot innovative solutions will help address the unique needs of our state.



Service – Through encouraging healthy lifestyles, our goal is to inspire healthy behaviors for life.

Our investment in communities and partnerships through Blue Health Initiatives is improving health and quality of life in Kansas.

Since its inception, Blue Health Initiatives has invested more than \$37 million across Kansas.





Dependability: Pathways to a Healthy Kansas

The *Pathways to a Healthy Kansas* initiative, known as *Pathways*, is the largest community grant initiative ever funded by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas (BCBSKS). It combines community-wide, evidence-based solutions and practices to help Kansas communities improve active living, healthy eating and commercial tobacco prevention. The initiative provides community coalitions with the tools and resources needed to engage their communities and remove barriers to healthy living.

Pathways addresses the social determinants of health (SDOH), which are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. SDOH can be grouped into six domains: economic stability, education access and quality, health care access and quality, access to healthy food, neighborhood and built environment and social and community context.

In Fort Scott, deep disparities exist between the east and west sides of town. The Healthy Bourbon County Action Team is working to address these disparities through a *Pathways* placemaking project. A key priority identified by the community was improvements to the 3rd Street Park. With funds from BCBSKS and other grants, they have fixed existing restrooms, added playground structures and built stairs for accessibility from one area of the park to another.



“I could cry at the transformation that has happened at the park. Now we have playground equipment and surfacing, and it is just a usable space for this neighborhood.”

– Rachel Carpenter, Director, Healthy Bourbon County Action Team





Growth and Progress: Trailblazers

The NXTSTAGE Community Health and Vibrancy Competition

BCBSKS was the presenting sponsor for this competition for the third year in a row. Nine leading startups were matched with Kansas communities for six pilot projects aimed at improving access to mental health and addiction treatment, enhancing services for seniors aging in place and providing systems to help local micro businesses thrive. In 2023, 92% of the startups were led by minority or female founders.



One pilot pairing was between Advocatia, a benefit screening platform, and Thrive Allen County. With so few local benefit offices available across the state, it could be an hour or more for Kansans to drive and access these services. Advocatia has allowed local navigators the ability to screen their clients for eligible state and federal benefits, helping them apply for these benefits all in one location, saving them frustration and valuable time.

Kansas Community Network

The Kansas Community Network is a system of health care and social service organizations who provide whole-person care and improve health outcomes for the most vulnerable members of the community. The network is supported by WellSky and is dedicated to removing social barriers and closing health equity gaps through social service delivery.

35+ community-based organizations

995 referrals made

681 clients with referrals

2,277 services referred

Top five services referred are parenting help and education; utility assistance; food pantries; community information and support; and care coordination.

United for Alice

ALICE in Kansas: A Study of Financial Hardship places a spotlight on a large population of hardworking Kansans who work at low-paying jobs, have little or no savings and are one emergency away from falling into poverty. BCBSKS provided a \$120,000 grant to jumpstart this work and we serve on the Research Advisory Committee. ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. View the full report at unitedforalice.org/state-overview/Kansas.





Service: Healthy Lifestyles

Healthy Lifestyle grants are a collection of statewide initiatives that engage people of all ages. The grants promote healthy habits and active living and are designed to meet the unique needs of each community. This year, we funded new BCBSKS Outdoor Fitness Courts, community orchards, and added two new KanCycle bike share locations in Lindsborg and Coffeyville.



Virginia Barnes
Director, Blue Health Initiatives



Carlie Houchen
Health and Community Initiatives Specialist



Sonia Jordan
Health Equity Manager



Scan to learn more.

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Health Equity



Health Equity

Pursuing a More Equitable Health Care System

Kansas is an unbelievably diverse state, full of people with different racial and ethnic backgrounds, speaking different languages and experiencing life in a variety of ways. Each of these people have different needs when it comes to their health, there's not a one-size-fits-all approach. At Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas (BCBSKS), we want the highest level of health for all people, often referred to as health equity. While this is a new focus area for BCBSKS, this work aligns with our company values and the way we have served our members since our inception.



Service – By partnering with other organizations in our state, we'll be able to support and advance this work.



Growth and Progress – Data collection will help inform work to address the deep racial and ethnic disparities in our state.



Courage – As we continue to build this program, we will work to create lasting, sustainable change in our state.

Equality means each individual is given the same resources or opportunities. Equity recognizes each person's differences and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.





Service: Fostering Collaboration & Growth

We partner with community organizations, health care partners, and health equity advocates to support and advance equity efforts throughout Kansas. We have sponsored several health equity events and conferences across the state, which provides opportunities to bring stakeholders together in shared learning and networking.

The **Kansas Health Equity Summit** was a one-day event designed to bring together the state's equity leaders and champions to accelerate and make progress on our collective expertise. BCBSKS was a primary sponsor of the conference and staff have served on the planning committee for the conference. The conference touched on a variety of areas from using data to pursue equitable health outcomes to understanding how community collaborations impact health equity.

As an Equity and Opportunity Champion for the Greater Topeka Partnership, BCBSKS served as a primary sponsor of the **2023 Kansas Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Summit** for the second consecutive year. BCBSKS staff served on the planning committee and helped host the event, which brought together area diversity, equity and inclusion champions and advocates from a wide variety of industries and organizations.

The **Maternal and Child Health Equity Conference: Addressing the Social Determinants of Health** event brought together providers, community advocates, researchers, and others to focus on the social determinants of health in order to make progress on identifying solutions to improve maternal and child health in Kansas. BCBSKS was a primary sponsor of the event that took place at Wichita State University and Virginia Barnes, Director, Blue Health Initiatives, served on an expert panel discussing maternal and child health in Kansas.

According to the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, the prevalence of severe maternal morbidity events has increased by

23%

from 2018 to 2021 among Kansas members.



Service: Supporting Learning around Maternal Health

We serve as the primary funder for birth equity training for Kansas hospitals wanting to improve maternal health outcomes. Through our partnership with the Fourth Trimester Initiative at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the Kansas Birth Equity Network (KBEN) at the University of Kansas Medical Center, we provided funding for all health systems participating in the Fourth Trimester to attend KBEN birth equity training.



The KBEN birth equity training curriculum focuses on understanding the need for birth equity and fostering an understanding of the factors that contribute to poor maternal health outcomes, specifically for Black mothers. Kansas hospitals began implementing this training in 2023 with more to come in 2024.

“The strategic partnership between Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and the Kansas Birth Equity Network has enhanced the access of training opportunities for those in maternal health care across the state of Kansas. The training will enhance the capacity of health care workers to provide equitable birth outcomes for all Kansans — leading to happier, healthier moms and babies.”

– Jill Elizabeth Nelson, Maternal and Perinatal Initiatives Consultant, Kansas Department of Health and Environment





Growth and Progress: Data-driven Decision Making

Collection and analysis of data is an important step in any organization's equity journey. Data analysis helps us identify differences in health outcomes between member groups, which allows us to make informed decisions to improve health conditions and outcomes for all of our members. This is why we are investing in innovative data analytics to ensure that all members have the opportunity to be as healthy as possible. We are beginning with analytics around maternal health, but plan to expand into other health areas in the coming years.



Courage: Advancing Health Equity

We will continue to align the health equity program to the five priorities within the National Health Equity Strategy framework from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association:

- **Collect data to measure disparities** – We are working closely with internal stakeholders to ensure our internal data can tell a comprehensive and cohesive story of health equity among our members and the various health disparities and inequities they face.
- **Scale effective programs** – Data will be used to determine which interventions can be deployed to have a positive impact on the health of both our members and all Kansans.
- **Work with providers to improve outcomes and address unconscious bias** – We are strategically partnering with statewide organizations to provide opportunities for improving health outcomes with providers, including providing funding for the Kansas Birth Equity Network.
- **Lean into partnerships at the community level** – We recognize we cannot do this work alone, to be truly effective it must be done with trusted community partners. We are working to establish strategic statewide and community-level partnerships to foster growth in our equity work.
- **Influence policy decisions at the state and federal levels** – Our Health Equity program is organizationally placed within the Government and Community Relations division, allowing for strategic partnerships.



Virginia Barnes

Director, Blue Health Initiatives



Sonia Jordan

Health Equity Manager

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**We are Kansans serving Kansans
and are honored to have served
this state for more than 80 years.
We look forward to continuing to
partner with you to improve the
health of all Kansans.**



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