

# FINDING A SOLUTION, TOGETHER.

## 2024 POLICY PRIORITIES

MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE ABUSE COALITION



— Mental Health and —  
Substance Abuse Coalition

# VALUES



```
graph LR; A((VALUES)) --- B((ACT IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE COMMUNITY)); A --- C((PATIENT-CENTRIC)); A --- D((TRANSPARENT)); A --- E((RESPECT EACH OTHER & THE PROCESS)); A --- F((SERVE PEOPLE OF ALL AGES IN CRISIS));
```

ACT IN THE BEST INTEREST  
OF THE COMMUNITY

PATIENT-CENTRIC

TRANSPARENT

RESPECT EACH OTHER  
& THE PROCESS

SERVE PEOPLE OF ALL  
AGES IN CRISIS

# ABOUT

The Mental Health & Substance Abuse Coalition is a collection of passionate partners who want a better future for the community.



## VISION:

Create a community where people in crisis find a place of hope and a path to health.



## MISSION:

Develop a sustainable, accessible and integrated system of care that serves people with mental health and substance abuse disorders who are in crisis, in order to efficiently and effectively deliver services that create positive outcomes.

# GOALS



## ACCESS TO CARE:

To reduce barriers so patients can get to services they need when they need them.



## COORDINATION, COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION:

To create a system of care that relies on improved communication, coordination and collaboration among service providers.



## WORKFORCE:

To have enough employees to meet demand in mental health, substance abuse, social work and other behavioral health professions.

# BOARD MEMBERS

- Robyn Chadwick, Retired Ascension Via Christi Hospital, MHSAC President
- Joan Tammany, COMCARE, MHSAC Vice President
- Jeff Easter, Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office, MHSAC Secretary
- Harold Casey, SACK, MHSAC Treasurer
- Gary Schmitt, INTRUST Bank, MHSAC Compliance Officer
- Marc Bennett, Office of the District Attorney 18th Judicial District
- Steve Dixon, P.B. Hoidale Co, Inc.
- Todd Johnson, Wichita Crime Commission and SummitMedia
- Richard Kerschen, The Law Company, Inc.
- Terri Moses, USD 259
- Laura Rainwater, Sedgwick County Election Commissioner
- Deann Smith, United Methodist Open Door
- LaTasha St. Arnault, HumanKind Ministries
- Joe Sullivan, Wichita Police Department
- Michelle Vann, Vanntastic Solutions
- Maggie Ballard, Wichita City Council
- Becky Tuttle, Wichita City Council
- Ryan Baty, Sedgwick County Commission
- Sarah Lopez, Sedgwick County Commission
- Secretary Laura Howard, Kansas Department for Aging & Disability
- Deputy Secretary Scott Brunner, Kansas Department for Aging & Disability

# 2024 POLICY PRIORITIES

## 1 Assist and support the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Coalition to develop a workforce pipeline, attract new workforce, and support current behavioral healthcare staff.

- A. Develop a comprehensive behavioral health workforce education ladder.
  - Create standardized and accredited educational programs that offer a range of behavioral health degrees and certifications, from entry-level positions to advanced specialties.
- B. Establish and support efforts to create a workforce/ employer incentive program for mental/behavioral health care workers (like the Kansas Aviation Tax Credit program).
- C. Include retired licensed mental/behavioral health employees in the KPERS exemption of penalty list as rehires.
- D. Reduce barriers to reciprocity for licensed behavioral health care workers with appropriate credentials who are relocating to Kansas.

### Why

The shortage of qualified behavioral health professionals in the Wichita area is indeed a concerning issue, and it's crucial to address the challenges that hinder the recruitment and retention of such professionals. The factors mentioned, including lack of incentives, low pay, and high caseloads leading to burnout, are common issues faced by behavioral health professionals across many regions. Identifying comprehensive solutions to the shortage of behavioral health professionals, especially when the South-Central Regional Mental Health Hospital opens.

## 2 Increase Medicaid rate for all in-patient and out-patient behavioral health services.

- A. Adjustments will assist healthcare providers meet rising operating costs and should be based on a comprehensive understanding of the cost drivers with providers.
- B. Implement regular Medicaid rate adjustments tied to the rate of inflation for all In-Patient and Out-Patient Behavioral Health Services.

### Why

In 2022, a four percent Medicaid increase was approved to assist with the reimbursement rate. This was the first increase in the past 13 years. Additional resources are needed to allow providers to recover the cost of providing services. Providers struggle to attract and retain workforce because they cannot provide competitive wages at the current reimbursement rate. Eligible providers are rapidly leaving Kansas for higher pay and lower patient and caseload sizes. Fewer providers lead to less access to care with higher cost in emergency services.

# 3 Protect and create state laws that encourage collaboration with local governments and financially support efforts to provide affordable accessible housing.

Why

- A. Supporting the Housing First program as it is designed with a consumer-centered approach, taking into account the needs and preferences of the individuals receiving services.
- B. Determine the appropriate level of funding needed to delivery of supported housing services by the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC) and other mental health, substance abuse and housing providers.
  - To make this policy change, it is requested that legislative or regulatory action to establish the authority for KDADS to fund and direct CCBHC's to provide supported housing services.

Cities are struggling to increase access to affordable housing while also addressing public safety concerns associated with unhoused people. People who are unhoused or lack stable housing and those leaving jails, prisons, psychiatric facilities and nursing homes often need supportive housing. Cities and community based agencies need access to state and federal funding and support for their efforts – not mandates that are counter-productive and create barriers for individuals to access housing

# 4 Reinstate 2022 Kansas House Bill No. 2377.

- A. This allows individuals involved in DUI treatment courts to participate in substance use treatment in lieu of mandatory minimum prison sentence and help reduce the prison population by assisting offenders to successfully complete treatment.
- B. Continue post incarceration supervision to Court Services and Community Corrections for those who have been convicted of 3rd DUI Misdemeanors and for 3rd & Subsequent DUI Felonies.

Why

Reinstating this bill is paramount, not just a matter of healthcare but indeed as a critical public safety measure. The care coordination and treatment program supports are indispensable services for offenders grappling with addiction, especially concerning driving under the influence (DUI) offenses. This bill plays a pivotal role in addressing substance abuse issues among offenders, offering comprehensive support to help them understand addiction, undergo treatment, and make necessary lifestyle changes for sustained recovery. By addressing the underlying causes of substance abuse, these programs contribute significantly to breaking the cycle of addiction and reducing the likelihood of repeat DUI offenses.

# 5 Increase access for behavioral health care.

Why

- A. Allowing services for community members whose income range makes them ineligible for Medicaid insurance.
- B. Identify, implement and fund a program to reduce the number of uninsured Kansans, particularly those living below 200% of poverty or below for behavioral health.

Kansas is losing behavioral healthcare workers to surrounding states due to higher wages provided by Medicaid expansion. With an increase in Medicaid, behavioral healthcare agencies could offer more services, increase wages, and put dollars back into the Kansas economy.

# SUPPORTING ISSUES

## **1 Support a \$15 million appropriation to supplement annual cost for private in-patient psychiatric beds.**

Improve the annual financial deficit on private in-patient beds that support Medicaid and uninsured patients, that are filling in for the deficiencies in the state's psychiatric bed availability.

## **2 Support a \$50 million appropriation to establish a state matching grant program to address local homelessness needs.**

As you begin the process of drafting the State Fiscal Year 2025 Budget, we respectfully request consideration for local municipalities in our state to receive \$50 million in state funding through a state grant match program to address local homelessness infrastructure.

## **3 Fully fund established crisis stabilization centers.**

Crisis services across the state need funding to support community crisis needs. Advocacy is needed at both regional and state levels.

Crisis stabilization centers were initially funded by the State as part of a state-wide plan for continuum of care for people in crisis. However, funding to support crisis centers, like COMCARE, has not kept up with demand. We request an additional \$1.5 million for the crisis stabilization center in Wichita as part of the request for statewide funds of \$9.5 million.

## **4 Support the Wichita State University and University of Kansas Biomedical School.**

The Mental Health and Substance Abuse Coalition supports the Wichita State University and University of Kansas Biomedical School.

- Together, these schools will offer enhanced programming that will prioritize biomedical and health care in Wichita.
- The campus has received a \$35 million commitment from the Kansas Legislature. Wichita State University and the University of Kansas were both recently approved by the Kansas Board of Regents to request a \$10 million bond payment for the institutions to build the facility. More investment in health care means mental/behavioral health care workers will be attracted to, and stay in, Wichita.



In 2019, a group of leaders from law enforcement, health care, behavioral health programs, private businesses, education and local nonprofits formed the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Coalition. It was the natural evolution of a group that had been working at the intersection of mental health, substance abuse, and homelessness issues in Wichita and the surrounding areas for several years.



— Mental Health and —  
Substance Abuse Coalition

---



---

**PUBLIC POLICY & MANAGEMENT CENTER**

## CONTACT

Dawn Shepler, *Executive Director*

(316) 978-6541

dawn.shepler@wichita.edu

[www.mhsacoalition.org](http://www.mhsacoalition.org)