



Community Health Workers in Action: Cross-Sector Partnerships in Kansas



SPEAKERS



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The US is suffering a healthcare worker shortage. Experts fear it will only get worse.

An aging population and healthcare workforce are contributing to the shortage.

By Alejandra O'Connell-Domenech | Sep. 28, 2023



**THE
HILL**

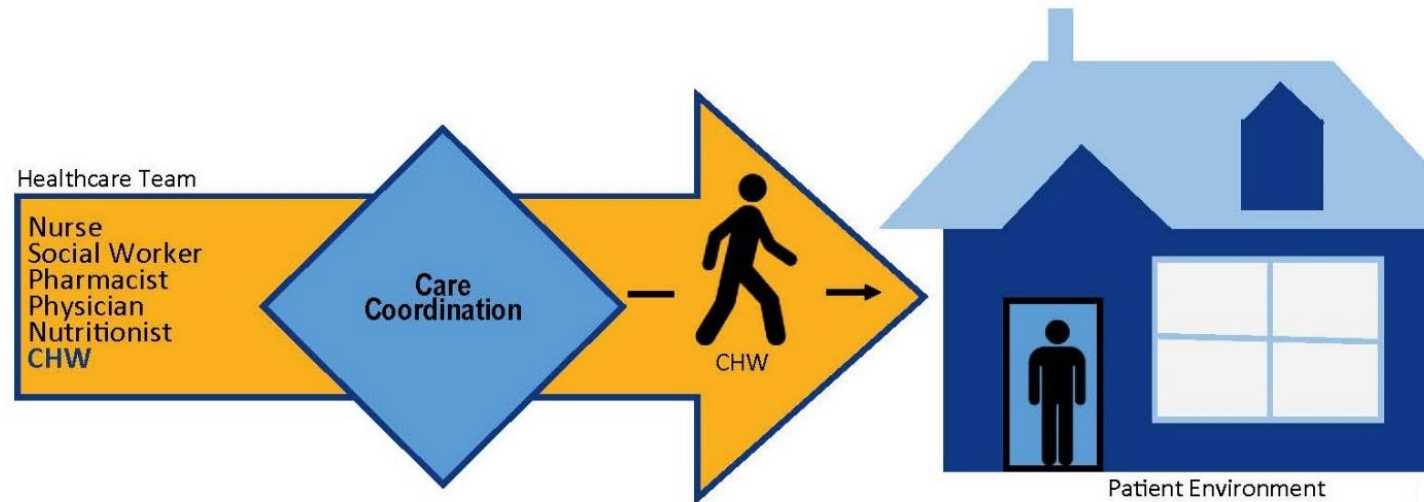
Rural Patient Access and Workforce Challenges

- Rural and underserved patient populations face limited health care access and higher rates of chronic conditions.
- A shortage of healthcare workers (e.g., CHWs) to work with underserved populations exists.
- Client navigators, care coordinators, CHWs can drive positive clinical and financial outcomes.



Community Health Worker is. . .

. . . a frontline public health worker who is a **trusted member** of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served.



Who employs CHWs?

- Schools & universities
- Clinics & hospitals
- Physician offices
- Social service organizations
- Health insurance organizations
- Public health agencies
- Faith-based organizations
- Non-profit organizations
- More!

What are the benefits of CHWs?

- Reduced health care costs
- Improved health outcomes
- Increased health insurance coverage
- Increased use of preventive care
- Reduced use of urgent and emergency care
- Improved self-management of chronic diseases
- More culturally aware provider practices



Kansas Community Health Worker Scope of Practice

Client Support: Provides encouragement and social support

Care Coordination: Links people to information and services.

Healthcare Liaison: Is a culturally-informed liaison between clients, health and care systems.

Health Education: Provides culturally appropriate health education to individuals, organizations and/or communities to improve health literacy.

Advocacy: Recognizes gaps and advocates for individual and community health needs.



Where to Find Community Health Workers in Kansas

Access Point: 📍 Headquarters: 📍

An access point is defined as a location where a patient or client might have access to a CHW but a CHW may not be stationed there.



This information is provided for the purposes of understanding CHW program distribution. If interested in establishing partnerships and referral systems, please contact the program directly.

If you would like to change program information, add your program, or remove information, please contact Alissa Rankin at alissa.rankin@wichita.edu.

This map was made possible by the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund.

2025 map

How to Become a Certified Kansas Community Health Worker



Choose a Pathway

Education Pathway

Applicant must complete the KDHE approved CHW training program through the Kansas CHW Coalition or certified Kansas CHW education provider.

Both Missouri Certified CHWs and Indian Health Services (IHS) Community Health Representatives (CHRs) are eligible to apply for CHW certification in Kansas. Please see additional information under the "Criteria for CHW Certification" dropdown below.

OR

Work Experience Pathway

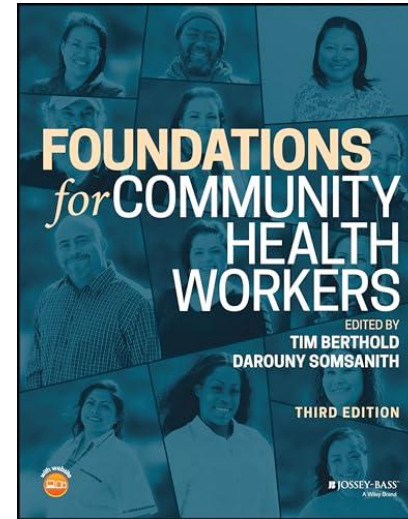
Applicant must complete 800 hours over three years plus three letters of recommendation to document work and/or volunteer experience.

Submit the application and payment

Thanks to United Healthcare, all payments for the Kansas Community Health Worker Coalition certification initial certification applications, reinstatement applications, and recertification applications have been waived.

Be sure to include all required documentation with your application submission:

- Completed application
- Signed Code of Ethics Form
- Copy of the certification or certification card from the Missouri Credentialing Board*



- 160hrs core competency course (online)
- 100hrs content + 60hrs practical

KCHWC currently recognizes the **Missouri CHW-Certified (CHW-C) credential** and the Indian Health Service **Community Health Representative (CHR)** certificate as valid proof of completing an approved CHW training program.





Treva Smith



How we started

Successes

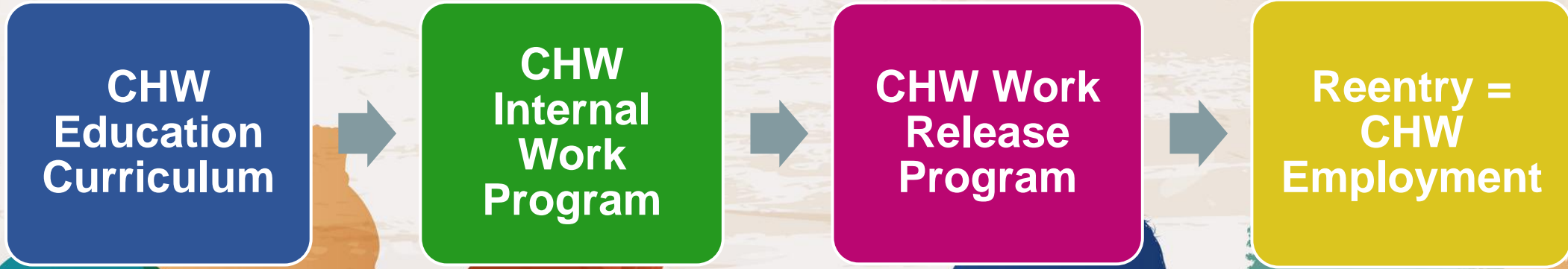
- Connections in the facility
- CHW instructors
- A new program in Kansas
 - Increased interest

Challenges

- Slow communication
- Lengthy approval process
- A new program in KS
 - Numerous explanations and approvals



CHW Program Goals



Project Process

Part 1

Approval Process

- Several Levels of approval
- Written Proposal
 - Concern- can/will they be hired?

Key Partners

- Which facilities for expansion pilot
- CHW Instructors in those areas (limited technology)

IRB Process

- Special Population
- What needs approval? What does not?

Contract Process

- Long process with State departments
- Facility, instructors, expansion pieces

Supplies

- Printed materials
- Books
- Binders with no metal

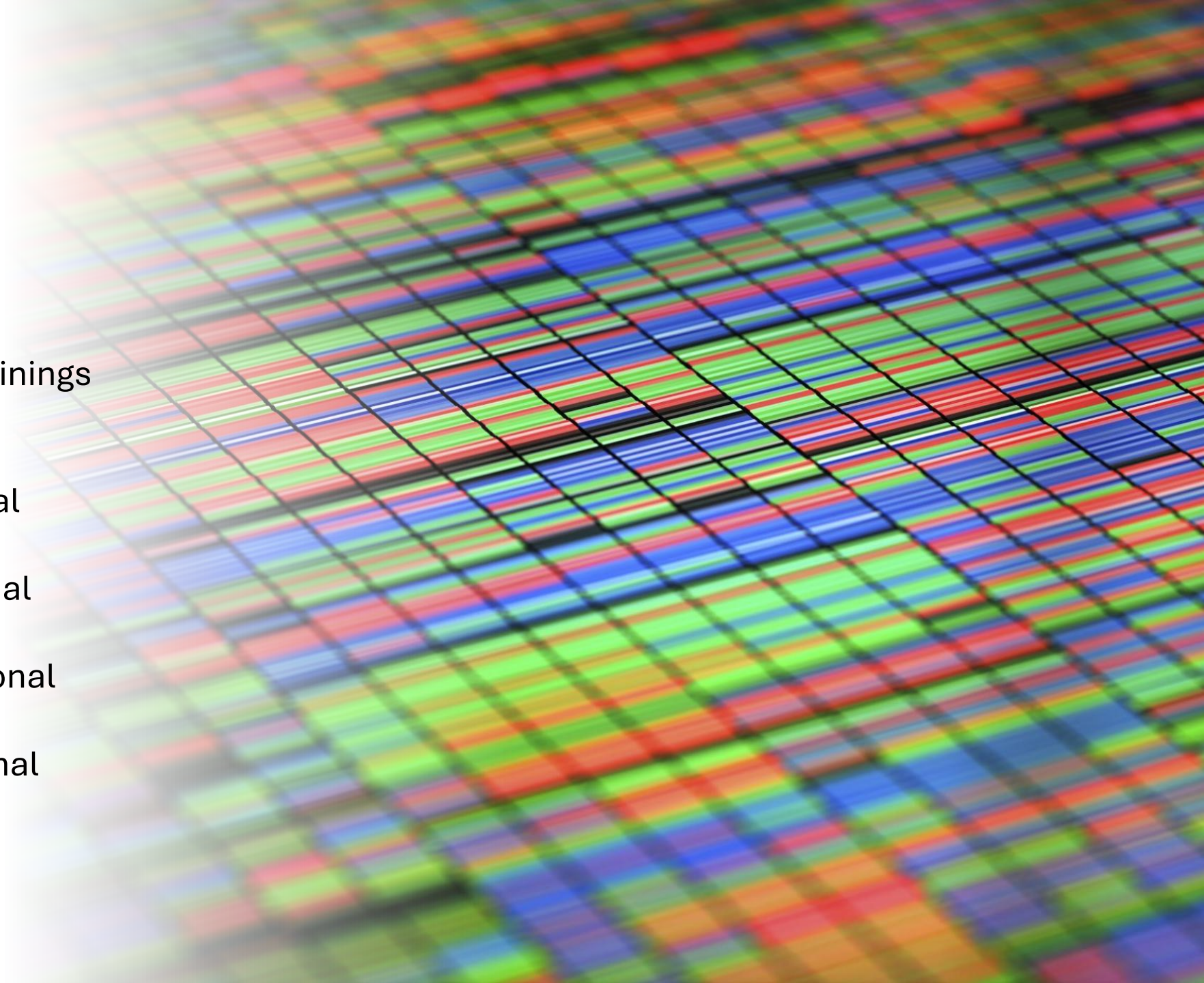
Project Expansion Process

Part 2



Program Expansion

- We have conducted trainings in a total of 4 state corrections facilities
 - Topeka Correctional Facility
 - Lansing Correctional Facility
 - Ellsworth Correctional Facility
 - Winfield Correctional Facility



Let's talk about impact

Success Stories-Student received lucrative job offers upon release, Students continuing education MHFA, Peer Support, Palliative Care, Social Work.

Work within- CHW helping residents manage chronic conditions, helping with palliative care, helping resident manage SUD, Using conflict resolution skills and helping soon to be released residents with resources for reentry.





Tricia McCourt



SENT, INC COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER WORKFORCE PROGRAM

The SENT, Inc Community Health Worker (CHW) workforce program demonstrates how incarcerated women can be trained and engaged in meaningful, community-centered work that directly addresses social determinants of health.

The data from February–April reflects:

- High engagement in client intake and resource navigation
- Significant focus on food insecurity and behavioral health needs
- Expansion of operational and volunteer-support activities in April
- Increasing breadth of community support services
- Practical workforce skill development through real-world service coordination



SENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SENT, Inc., KDHE, TCF, and Kansas Correctional Industries Launch Community Health Worker Workforce Development Program

Topeka, KS – February 2026 – SENT, Inc., in partnership with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), Topeka Correctional Facility (TCF), Kansas Correctional Industries (KCI), and Health Legacy and Restorative Pathways, is proud to announce the launch of a new Community Health Worker (CHW) Workforce Development Program, an innovative initiative designed to strengthen community health while creating meaningful employment pathways for individuals preparing to reenter society.

Through this innovative partnership, individuals currently residing at Topeka Correctional Facility have completed KDHE's Community Health Worker certification program and are now serving as paid SENT employees while completing onsite, hands-on job training in the Community Health Worker (CHW) role. The program operates as a 7-month work-release internship, providing participants with real-world experience, professional accountability, and workforce readiness during the final phase of incarceration.

"Our top priority at the Kansas Department of Corrections is ensuring that individuals return to their communities with the tools necessary for long-term success," said Jeff Zmuda, Secretary of the Kansas Department of Corrections. "This partnership with SENT, Inc. and the KDHE is a model for effective reentry. By providing residents at the Topeka Correctional Facility with professional certification and real-world experience as Community Health Workers, we are not only strengthening the local healthcare workforce but also creating a proven pathway toward meaningful employment and a stable future."

Treva Smith of Health Legacy and Restorative Pathways has played a critical role in the success of this program by teaching the Community Health Worker coursework at Topeka Correctional Facility and coordinating required service-learning activities. These efforts ensure participants are able to fulfill KDHE certification requirements while gaining practical, community-based experience rooted in restorative and trauma-informed practices.

"This partnership shows what's possible when public health, workforce development and reentry efforts align," said Janet Stanek, KDHE Secretary. "By providing certification, on-site training and connections to housing and healthcare, the program helps participants build careers and furthers equitable access to trusted, community-based care. We're proud to support a model that strengthens neighborhoods and creates opportunities for Kansas communities."

Participants work alongside SENT's Community Wellness and Neighbor Advocacy teams, supporting neighbors through health resource navigation, benefits assistance, proactive case management, and connection to critical social and healthcare services. Their work directly strengthens access to care, reduces barriers to essential resources, and supports health equity across Shawnee County.

"At SENT, we are focused on creating systems that last," said Jill Rice, Operations Director of SENT, Inc. "This pilot allows us to design and test a Community Health Worker workforce model that supports reentry while meeting real community health needs—one we hope can be replicated across Kansas."

Beyond job training, participants are connected to wraparound supports that may include housing navigation, case management, employment readiness resources, and access to healthcare and counseling—critical components for reducing recidivism and supporting long-term stability after release.

The program was launched with two Community Health Workers, with plans to scale as funding and capacity allow. SENT and its partners view this initiative as a replicable model for combining public health workforce development with successful reentry strategies—strengthening both individual outcomes and community well-being.

IMPACT

Across the three months, the program documented:

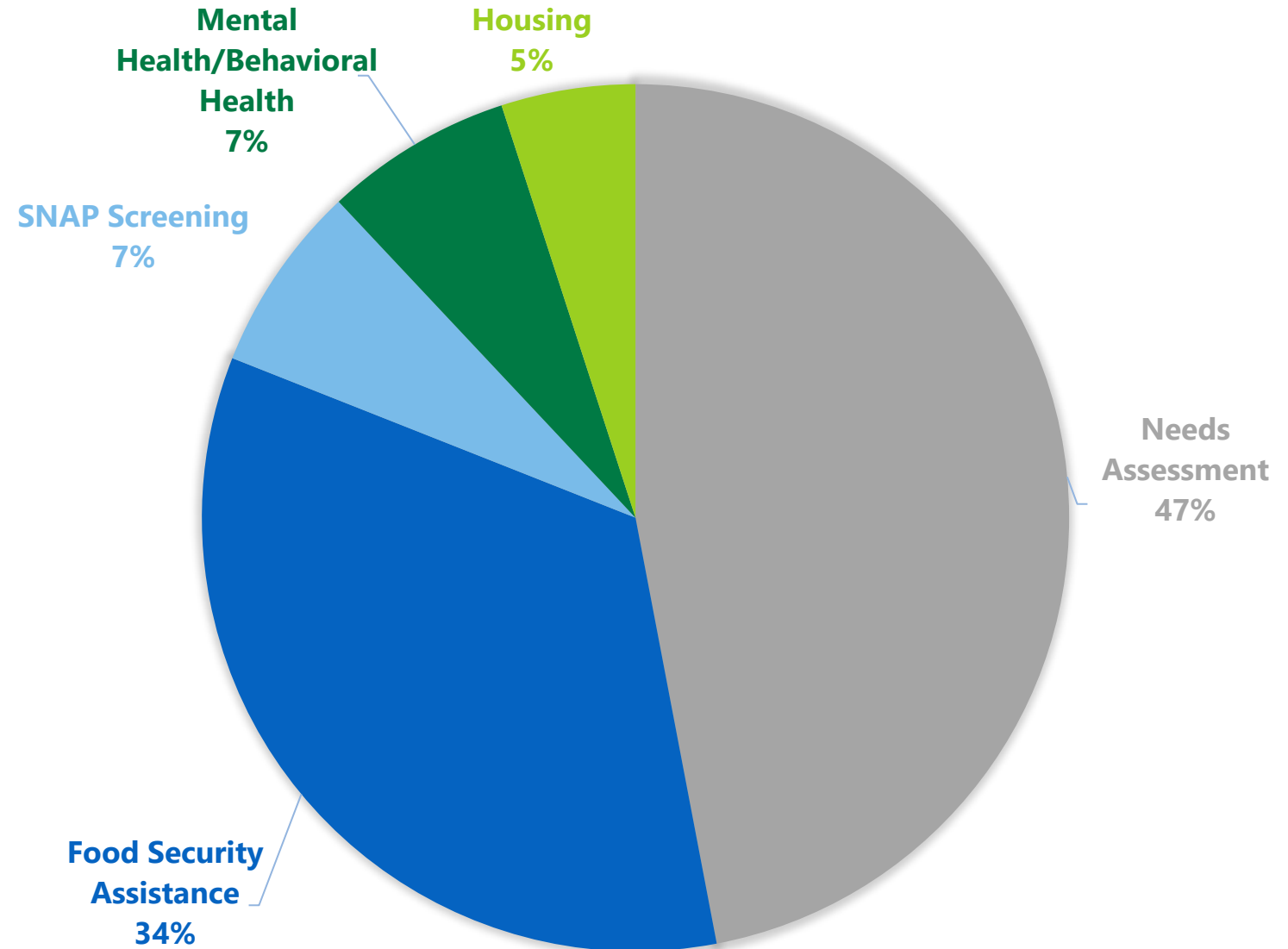
- **963 total service touchpoints/interactions**
- Strong emphasis on food access, behavioral health, housing, and financial stability
- Increasing involvement in administrative and leadership-support tasks

The data supports the idea that CHWs can play a ***critical*** role in:

- Reentry preparation
- Community stabilization
- Health equity
- Workforce development
- Addressing upstream social determinants of health



BASIC NEEDS ARE THE PRIMARY DRIVER OF ENGAGEMENT



Workforce Development Outcomes

- Participants supported volunteer coordination and pantry operations
- Operational activities included mail sorting and client outreach
- Program appears to build communication, leadership, and administrative skills
- Model supports real-world workforce readiness and transferable skill development



STRATEGIC IMPACT



Addresses upstream social determinants of health



Creates meaningful workforce pathways for justice-involved populations



Builds trust and engagement within the community



Supports long-term reentry stabilization and employability



Extends the reach of community health and social service systems



REAL LIFE IMPACT

"This is a great opportunity to just show the changes and growth I want to make in myself and in my community. I get to be a part of helping others grow. I have been in similar situations as some of the people we help, so I want to do what I can to help them in areas where I never had help."

--DD



REAL LIFE IMPACT

“Being a CHW at SENT has given me a chance at my own future, to make changes, help others, and change the world little by little with one smile at a time. It gives full meaning to me of one of my favorite scriptures, Proverbs 31:25- She clothes herself with strength and dignity, and she lives without fear of the future.”

--DC

»Be the«
CHANGE
—you wish
to see in the
WORLD





QUESTION AND ANSWER SEGMENT

SPEAKER CONTACT INFORMATION



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2026 Kansas Health Impact Conference

OCTOBER 29

MANER CONFERENCE CENTER | TOPEKA, KS



Health Equity Resource Hub

Dismantle Health Disparities & Foster Equitable Healthcare Solutions

KFMC and our partners believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to lead a healthy life, regardless of their background, identity, or socioeconomic status. Our Health Equity Resource Hub was created to help healthcare professionals, organizations, and communities make informed decisions, raise awareness, and take action.



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