



2015 Human Service Summit
WORK GROUP

Action Strategy: Make every health and human service sector job a “good job.”

Summary of expert remarks

Becky Salter, Director of Human Resources for Johnson County, defined the characteristics of a “good job”. She emphasized that historically, a “good job” included pay and health benefits. Now, as family and economic dynamics have shifted, a “good job” is characterized by a living wage, a full insurance benefits package, retirement, paid leave, opportunities for advancement, and other arrangements that promote a work/life balance.

Given that the state minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour and only 77% of Kansas City-area nonprofits offer paid leave, there are clear gaps in the ability to provide “good jobs” with the health and human service workforce in Kansas City. Opportunities for professional development, cross-training, and flexible scheduling emerged as non-monetary attributes of a “good job”. Participants discussed the importance of predictable hours for hourly employees. Organizational culture was also cited as an important factor; the workplace policies as well as the physical environment must be supportive of employees. Participants also see the benefit of professional development opportunities that occur during work hours or are subsidized by employers.

Finally, participants discussed how they might implement this strategy, including: consideration of flexible scheduling and telecommute arrangements; surveying employees to determine needs; and offering financial management and retirement consultation. Participants also discussed organizational barriers to providing “good jobs”. Organizations that receive funding for temporary employees are often restricted from being able to offer health insurance or retirement.

Work Framework Goals discussion

Following the Call to Action expert presentation and discussion, small group attendees were asked to review the WORK section of the Framework for Reducing Poverty and Creating Opportunity and identify actions they planned to take in the next three months. The following are a sample of shared responses.

The majority of jobs include household stabilizing benefits. Possible actions include analyzing existing practices around scheduling and benefits, and researching best practices in the field.

The negative impact of past history / prior actions on employment opportunities is minimized. Actions include eliminating a question of a criminal record until after the initial screening process has been completed.

Wide-ranging career training pathways to better employment and higher income. Possible actions include facilitating access to certification programs for employees, and learning about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to determine potential partnerships and programs.

2015 Human Service Summit Education Group

Action strategy: Talk, Read, Play

Summary of expert remarks

Dean Olson, president of The Family Conservancy (TFC), shared about the Talk, Read, Play (TRP) program, one of UCS' call to action strategies to promote early brain development and better outcomes among low-income households with children. He described how different organizations had implemented the program through public commitment to the program and its goals; distribution of materials for adults promoting specific actions; distribution of children's books; raising public awareness with bumper stickers; and having pediatricians prescribe reading. In addition, the kinds of resources available to support organizations were shared. Mr. Olson expressed that the Family Conservancy's early outreach efforts had targeted local organizations already working with high risk children and their families including Parents as Teachers and public health departments— and that the new opportunity to connect with social service agencies could significantly expand their outreach's scope. In measuring outcomes after four months, the greatest improvements were seen among those children who initially were the lowest scoring.

Participants in the small group discussion generated ideas about how to expand TRP's scope of influence including: expanding the language diversity of TRP materials; partnering with additional organizations promoting reading, engaged in early childhood education, or serving significant numbers of adults with children; raising awareness of TRP with healthcare providers and their role in influencing parenting practices; and incorporating the TRP message into existing programming already being conducted in the county.

Finally, participants discussed how they might promote TRP within their scope of influence, incorporating many of the ideas they had already generated. While the activities promoted in TRP were described as familiar to most households, shifting to intentionally engaging to promote brain development and future academic success among children was a new emphasis for many populations. Participants asked for assistance with concrete ways to communicate the importance of TRP to parents and caregivers and how to play and teach children in their day to day interactions with them.

Education Framework Goals discussion

Following the Call to Action expert presentation and discussion, small group attendees were asked to review the education section of the Framework for Reducing Poverty and Creating Opportunity and identify action they planned to take in the next three months. Excitement about TRP was clearly evident in the proposed actions, as almost all directly related to implementing TRP. The following are a sample of the shared actions.

- Insert TRP into existing programs within the Department of Corrections community outreach programs, hospital neonatal ICU education, local library early literacy programs
- Seek new funding to expand early education services
- Raise awareness of TRP among local educators, other conduits of county information to extend impact
- Collaborate across networks to support each other's efforts and increase the likelihood that households will hear the message.

2015 Human Service Summit Safety Net Group

Action Strategy: Increase access to safety net support for adults without children and transitional age youth.

Summary of experts' remarks

Kim Brabits and Dustin Hardison of Catholic Charities of NE Kansas spoke about their organization's programming that provides safety net supports for adults, both male and female, who have no children under the age of 18 in the household. Much of this population – especially those 40-55 year olds who are unemployed or underemployed – are not able to utilize many of the safety net services provided by local organizations.

Catholic Charities is aware of this gap and has made a commitment to provide services for them. Staff use an assessment tool called the Arizona Matrix to assess 19 domains of living in order to prioritize services and resources needed and determine which of these supports Catholic Charities can offer them and which they need to rely on partners to provide. Based on priorities identified, the organization provides nutrition and food access, financial literacy/education along with financial assistance, rapid re-housing, and integrated community health services.

In order to be successful, Kim and Dustin shared the importance of partnering effectively with other community-based organizations and coordinating services. Serving this population was often challenging as they were less likely to seek assistance, especially early in their crisis, and funders most often prioritized or focused funding support for households with children. The broader group agreed that opening up a conversation with local funders to share the need for and importance of support for childless households was a necessary step to increasing access to safety net supports for these persons, while at the same time continuing to deliver services to households with children and consider their own organization's capacity to expand supports for childless households.

Safety Net Framework Goals discussion

Following the Call to Action expert presentation and discussion, small group attendees were asked to review the safety net section of the Framework for Reducing Poverty and Creating Opportunity and identify actions they planned to take in the next three months. The following are a sample of shared responses.

Goal: Dedicated, adequate resources are available to assist all individuals and families regain and maintain stability. Possible related actions included assuring that families of soon-to-be-released prisoners were connected to targeted resources that would support the household's stability and delivering needed mental health services out in the community in order to increase access and prevent crises.

Goal: Private and public partnerships exist to support a strong, local safety net. Possible related actions included creating stronger coordination and cooperation among publicly and privately funded agencies and organizations, with a focus on clients' needs and engagement of different organizations based on that organization's strengths and expertise.