



2016 HUMAN SERVICE SUMMIT

Reducing Poverty and Creating Opportunity: Expanding Income and Employability

The UCS Human Service Summit on June 14, 2016 was a celebration of collaborative efforts and a look forward to emerging opportunities. More than 120 professionals from local nonprofit organizations, city and county governments, foundations, and school districts attended this year's event.

2015 Call to Action: A Local Response

At the 2015 Summit, UCS issued a call to the human service sector to take the [Framework for Reducing Poverty and Creating Opportunity](#), and put it into action. Many organizations responded to that call. We were honored to celebrate those actions with a panel discussion from three organizations who shared the impact that they have made on poverty and opportunity within the human service sector.

Gordon Docking, President and CEO of KidsTLC, shared how his organization responded to the call ["Make Every Human Service Sector Job a Good Job"](#). Docking provided a step-by-step overview of how KidsTLC established a universal minimum wage and is moving the lowest-paid employees into higher wages. This action has garnered positive response and support from employees, which Docking hopes will lead to decreased turnover and greater continuity of service delivery.

Lougene Marsh, Director of Johnson County Department of Health and Environment, told the audience how her agency responded to the call to ["Promote the Talk Read Play campaign with clients, employees, and stakeholders"](#). The Department held a training on how to use the *Talk Read Play* message, which was attended by department heads and other staff. Marsh highlighted the importance of quality early learning environments for the health and development of young children, particularly those living in poverty.

Tim Gay, Founder and President of YOUTHRIVE, summarized how he has responded to the call to ["Increase access to safety net supports for adults without children and transitional age youth"](#). YOUTHRIVE is an organization that engages youth as they leave foster care and helps them work toward independence. Gay's expertise, along with the knowledge and experiences of several other stakeholders, helped UCS develop a report which recommends best practices for supporting youth who age out of foster care.

The panel discussion was followed by questions from the audience and an opportunity for Summit participants to reflect on ways that their organizations have responded to the call-to-action. UCS will publish examples of other responses to the call-to-action soon.

Looking Forward: Improving Income and Employability

UCS shared plans for an increased focus on employment and training opportunities for low-income households in Johnson County. Frank Lenk of Mid-America Regional Council shared a data presentation which highlighted the lack of growth in middle-income jobs, and limited career pathways within growing industries. This knowledge serves as the basis for UCS's new initiative, the [Employment Planning Project](#). Project Chair and UCS Board Member Justin Nichols provided an overview of the project goal, which is to develop a plan and recommend actions to increase income for low-income Johnson County residents. Justin was joined by two members of the 15-member Employment Planning Project work team, Lee Jost of Christ the Servant Church and Trent Howerton of Workforce Partnership, who shared why they joined the project and the impact it will have on Johnson County workers now and in the future.

Audience members then participated in a group discussion about strategies and opportunities to increase access to good jobs, which will inform the Employment Planning Project over the next several months.