



2018 PUBLIC POLICY PLATFORM

United Community Services of Johnson County believes in the importance of supporting policy, programs and services that invest in the success of our community's human resources and provide people the opportunity to achieve their individual potential. UCS provides data analysis, leads collaborative planning and mobilizes resources to enhance the availability and delivery of health and human services.

KANSAS LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY POSITIONS

Advance fiscal and taxation policies that support citizens' ability to reach and maintain economic stability. Strategic use of tax credits, refunds and rebates can help low wage earners stay employed:

- ◆ Protect the State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC): This credit allows low-wage earners to retain earned income to help meet their family's basic needs.
- ◆ Retain tax credits that support low-income families: Retain the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (restored during the 2017 legislative session) and food sales tax rebate, and reinstate the homestead property tax refund for renters (repealed during the 2012 legislative session).
- ◆ Reduce food sales tax: Kansas is one of only 13 states that includes food for at-home preparation in the state sales tax base and one of only seven that taxes food at the full retail sales tax rate. The purchase of groceries consumes a higher portion of low-income households' limited resources and results in lower-income households paying a larger portion of their income in taxes than higher income households.

Increase access to health care:

- ◆ Expand KanCare (Medicaid) eligibility: Affordable healthcare supports healthy families and a productive economy. Health impacts employment, productivity, academic achievement and financial stability. Health insurance is critical for ensuring good health. A Kansas-specific expansion of KanCare to maximize coverage to those newly eligible for Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will create an avenue for thousands of low-income, working people in Kansas to obtain healthcare coverage while creating new jobs and protecting healthcare providers.
- ◆ Restore Mental Health funding: Allow local community mental health centers (CMHC) to provide timely mental health care and treatment to all residents regardless of their ability to pay by restoring funding to the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services' budget. Oppose any further reduction to CMHCs.

Create a path of re-entry for youth transitioning out of foster care:

- ◆ In Kansas youth who are in out-of-home placement at the time they reach their 18th birthday can extend access to supportive services until at least 21 years of age. However, unlike 31 other states, Kansas does not have a pathway of re-entry for youth who have chosen to leave foster care when they reach 18. These 31 states allow a return to services after a youth has attempted to live independently, but recognizes they need additional support. A pathway for re-entry will allow youth to pursue educational or job training goals, ensure personal safety, and further develop skills needed to achieve self-sufficiency.

Advance employment policies that help low-income workers and increases access to employment:

- ◆ Increase TANF support of core activities that help prepare recipients for work: Kansas is one of 24 states that used less than half of their TANF funds on "core activities," which include job training, subsidized work, child care, education and basic cash assistance. Kansas spent only 4.8% of its TANF funds on work activities, work supports and supportive services, yet has work requirements as a key qualifier for families trying to access TANF assistance. Forty states spent a larger percentage of their TANF funds than Kansas on these efforts.

- ◆ Adopt Fair Chance Hiring Policies: A Fair Chance Hiring policy would allow people who were formerly involved with the criminal justice system to apply for jobs without disclosing previous criminal history until later in the hiring process. It can include exceptions for positions related to law enforcement. Offering a fair chance to people with criminal records can reduce recidivism, simultaneously stimulating the economy by creating work opportunities for those formerly involved in the criminal justice system and enabling them to support the well-being of their families. Twenty-nine states, more than 150 local jurisdictions and some of the nation’s top employers, including Koch Industries and Walmart, have removed the conviction history check box from job applications.
- ◆ Minimum wage and job benefits: An incremental increase in the federal minimum wage would correspondingly increase the Kansas minimum wage, thereby improving the ability of low-wage earners to move toward self-sufficiency. Employee benefits, stable and predictable work hours, and opportunities for advancement are also ways to help low-wage workers move toward self-sufficiency.

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY POSITIONS

- ◆ Sufficient funding to conduct the 2020 Census: We are less than three years away from the next decennial Census (i.e. the 2020 Census). Current funding levels are not sufficient to ensure a fair and accurate Census. 2018 is the critical year to test 2020 Census-taking techniques. Not having a quality, fair and accurate Census could cost Kansas more than \$4,400,000,000 in funding it receives from 16 of the largest federal assistance programs that distribute funds based on decennial Census-derived statistics. (FY 2015 figures. Source: George Washington Institute of Public Policy)
- ◆ Fully fund Early Childhood Education Act & Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): The years before a child reaches kindergarten are the most critical to influence learning. Many children do not have access to early education before entering kindergarten. Early learning programs such as Early Head Start give infants, toddlers, and children a positive start in life.

STANDING POSITIONS

Maintain essential safety net and work supports and provide state agency resources and staffing levels needed to deliver timely, effective services to those who qualify.

Enhance the lives of children and their families:

- ◆ Protect and preserve the Children’s Initiatives Fund (CIF) in order to advance early childhood learning.
- ◆ Support the successful graduation from high school of every Kansas resident and opportunities for post-secondary education and workforce training.

Improve individual and community well-being through physical and mental health strategies:

- ◆ Improve access to health care including preventive care, dental care and mental health care.
- ◆ Improve the criminal justice system’s response to people who are mentally ill.
- ◆ Maintain the current distribution formula for alcohol excise tax in order to support community-based alcohol and substance use programs.

Provide continued funding for RSI:

- ◆ RSI, a crisis stabilization center, provides services for persons experiencing mental health or substance abuse crises in Johnson and Wyandotte Counties.

Provide adequate funding for human service infrastructure:

- ◆ Protect investments in health and human services that support workforce development and self-sufficiency.

2017 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mike Hockley, President	Cheryl Harrison-Lee	Justin Nichols	Maury L. Thompson
Kate Allen	Lee Jost	Leo J. Nunnink	Kevin Tubbesing
Brian Brown	Roxann Kerr Lindsey	Tom Robinett	Rick Worrel
Jennifer Bruning	Donna Lauffer	Sandra Sanchez	
Tara S. Eberline	Janis McMillen	Paul Snider	Julie K. Brewer, Executive Director