



Congress of the United States

January 25, 2022

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D.
Assistant Secretary
U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, M.D. 20857

Dear Assistant Secretary Delphin-Rittmon:

We write in strong support of the Kansas Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) Planning Grant proposal submitted to the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).¹ Since Congress provided an expansion of this grant program, we have been in communication with the state agencies – the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment – as well as the 26 community mental health centers. We commend the work of the state legislature that made this possible and the proposal submitted by the state agencies. If awarded, our communities will be empowered to transform mental health services to provide timely access to care and strengthen the mental health workforce.

The state of mental health in Kansas is among the worst in the country. According to a report from Mental Health America, a community-based research and advocacy organization, Kansas is ranked the overall worst across 15 measures.² In fact, the largest effects on the overall ranking were youths with substance use disorder, adults with mental illness, and adults with suicidal ideation. Observing data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Kansas had historically poor outcomes for its patients. In suicide, Kansas had among the highest rate for people age 15-24 and 10-14 from 2016 to 2020.³ Young Kansans reporting feelings of sadness and hopelessness increased from 25 percent to nearly 38 percent between 2016 to last year.⁴ Several barriers have exacerbated the state of mental health care in our state including timely access to care in appropriate settings. More often than not, law enforcement and hospital emergency departments have been the first touch point for patients experiencing a mental health crisis.

¹ SAMSHA, FY2023 Cooperative Agreements for Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Planning Grants, No. SM-23-015.

² Mental Health America, The State of Mental Health in America: 2023, October 2022, <https://mhanational.org/issues/state-mental-health-america>.

³ Kansas Health Institute, Suicide Among Adolescents and Youth in Kansas: Rising Rates in the Sunflower State, by Wyatt J. Beckman, Kaci Cink, Angela Wu, and Wen-Chieh Lin, December 5, 2022, <https://www.khi.org/articles/suicide-among-adolescents-and-youths-in-kansas/>.

⁴ Kansas Health Institute, Youth and Young Adult Mental Health: Challenges & Opportunities in the Sunflower State, December 20, 2022, <https://www.khi.org/articles/youth-and-young-adult-mental-health-challenges-opportunities-in-the-sunflower-state/>.

While essential, they are not appropriate professionals trained to care for people experiencing a mental health crisis or issues related to substance use disorder.

Based on findings from states that have implemented a CCBHC demonstration, we are confident that Kansas will see positive health outcomes for patients.⁵ CCBHCs provide life-saving services such as crisis care, residential treatment, medications for serious mental illness, outpatient mental health and primary care services, and community re-entry support. CCBHCs have also proven to reduce hospital emergency services by providing timely access to coordinated care, and they have also provided aid to local law enforcement agencies by providing 24-hour mental health crisis response.

All levels of government in and representing Kansas have diligently worked to make the CCBHC model a potential solution. In 2021, Kansas passed comprehensive legislation to establish a process for certifying CMHCs as CCBHCs. Since then, nine CMHCs have been certified, and the remaining 17 CMHCs are on track to be certified as a CCBHC by 2024. Already, the initial nine are showing progress in increasing access to mental health and substance use disorder services, integrating behavioral health with physical health care, and utilizing evidence-based practices. Though still in early adoption, the expansion of CCBHCs at the initial nine CMHCs is proving to increase responsiveness and availability of mental health services to the Kansas communities they serve. We are confident that Kansas presents both the need for and the ability to capitalize on the opportunities afforded through this grant.

This grant would allow the joint applicants to lay critical groundwork to ensure that the CCBHC system is established effectively. Among other priorities, the applicants will use this planning grant to provide training and technical assistance to the CMHCs, MCOs, and key partners. In addition, the grant will also help in informing existing state regulations, finalize the prospective payment system selection according to new federal guidance; and submit a proposal to participate in a demonstration managed by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.⁶

We appreciate your work in advancing mental health initiatives that empower our communities to provide better access to mental health care. We believe this expansion grant is essential in providing better access to mental health care. Thank you for considering this application.

Sincerely,



Roger Marshall, M.D.
U.S. Senator



Jerry Moran
U.S. Senator



Ron Estes
U.S. Representative



Sharice L. Davids
U.S. Representative

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Kansas State Legislature, Supplemental Note on House Bill No. 2160, Session of 2021, http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2021_22/asures/documents/supp_note_hb2160_01_0000.pdf.