

Kansas Health Matters - January 25, 2012

Presented To

Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
And
House Health and Human Services Committee

By

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Sen. Schmidt, Rep. Landwehr, Members of the Committees

Thank you for allowing the Partnership to present information to this special meeting of the two committees today and share with you this valuable tool that's been developed to benefit all communities in Kansas.

Kansas Health Matters is a public website intended to help hospitals, health departments, community members and policy makers learn more about the health of their community and gather information on ways to improve it. This tool provides local health data, resources, best practices, news articles and information about community events related to important health issues.

The Partnership has recently demonstrated this website to hospitals and local health departments for the purpose of supporting the development of community health assessments and community health improvement plans; however, the site's content is relevant for anyone interested in how to assess and improve the health of communities. From a public health perspective, Kansas Health Matters will be an essential tool in upcoming health assessments and health improvement planning conducted by our state's Local Health Departments and Hospitals. Not only will the use of this tool help communities identify their most pressing health concerns or gaps in services, but as communities began planning to address these needs, they will have access to evidence-based or promising practices that can be implemented to address the identified health needs. Kansas Health Matters will aid in that effort.

These activities of health assessment and health improvement planning are also important to public health departments seeking accreditation. Public health accreditation is defined as the development of a set of standards, a process to measure health department performance against those standards, and reward or recognition for those health departments who meet the standards. Accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board provides a means for a department to identify performance improvement opportunities, to improve management, develop leadership and improve relationships with the community. The process is

one that will challenge the health department to think about what business it conducts and how it conducts that business. It will encourage and stimulate quality and performance improvement in the health department. It will also promote greater accountability and transparency. Health departments can work toward accreditation either as a single organization or as part of a regional effort. According to a survey recently conducted by KDHE, about 70 percent of Kansas county health departments have indicated some level of interest in applying for accreditation while three of the largest departments reported they are on track to apply for accreditation. A majority of Kansas local health departments have either recently completed a community health assessment or have taken steps to begin that process. This is good news for Kansas, as community health assessments—with or without applying for accreditation—give communities actionable information imperative to improving the health of their citizens. The Kansas Health Matters website plays an important role in assessing the health of communities.

However, this site is not just for health officials. It can benefit anyone—reporters, students, chambers of commerce, county commissions, city councils, charities, etc.—interested in the various indicators contained in the Kansas Health Matters community dashboard.

Health Indicators generated by this website include:

- Access to Health Services
- Children's Health
- Exercise, Nutrition & Weight
- Heart Disease & Stroke
- Immunizations & Infectious Diseases
- Maternal, Fetal and & Infant Health
- Mortality Data
- Prevention & Safety
- Respiratory Diseases
- Substance Abuse
- Wellness & Lifestyle

In addition to Health-specific data, the site includes other Indicator categories such as Economy (Poverty) and Social Environment (Demographics).

The website, which you'll see demonstrated by Mr. Austin here in a moment, contains county, regional and state health indicators, local resources and a wealth of other information in one user-friendly location. The Partnership has ensured that the data associated with this site come from the most reliable, comprehensive sources in the state and the nation. Hospital discharge data and the status on staffed hospital beds has been made available through this site, while KDHE's data contributions include Vital Statistics, the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, the STD Program, the Immunization Survey, the WIC Program, and the

Environmental Public Health Tracking System. National data for Kansas Health Matters is made available by the US Census. As the site gets further underway, we can tap into additional reports and data sources from our Division of Environment and Division of Health Care Finance and integrate them into this website as well. This will include reports on air quality and Medicaid insurance coverage.

The evolving nature of this website allows all users of the Kansas Health Matters to contribute information and ideas. The Promising Practices section, for example, highlights exemplary programs and successes at local, state and national levels and is a place where the users of all the websites making up the Healthy Communities Network has submitted their lessons learned and program results. In short, this site allows for both give and take.

Like Dr. Bob St. Peter, I applaud the Partnership and its member organizations – and I'm grateful we can serve as a collaboration model for other states in their health assessments and improvement. KDHE is a proud member of the Kansas Partnership for Improving Community Health and we look forward to continued success in this project and in future endeavors supporting improved health outcomes for all Kansans. I hope you and your staff will find value in this website and provide feedback along the way.

Chad Austin from the Kansas Hospital Association is here today to demonstrate features of the Kansas Health Matters website.

Thank you again for allowing the Partnership to be here today and share this health assessment resource with you.

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