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## FEBRUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER

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### spotlight



#### Racial Disparities in Health

by Grant Day, CPHI VISTA

Kansas is no stranger to the nationwide problem of systemic racial inequity in health care. Disparities often manifest as soon as a medical provider initiates contact with a patient. While overt racism does occur in American medical treatment, a more common form of racial discrimination is through microaggressions: subtle, frequent

and often unintentional verbal or physical slights that break the trust between patients of color and providers and lead to worse health outcomes for affected populations. These can range from broken eye contact to condescending assumptions about patients based on racial or ethnic stereotypes. A ubiquitous medical microaggression is for providers to assume that patients of color are unable to pay for services, resulting in critical medical services not reaching already-vulnerable populations. In essence: good intentions do not guarantee good care.

A closely related form of discrimination is implicit bias: unstated and unconscious beliefs that impact patient care. Black patients are far less likely to receive needed pain medicine than white patients. Providers are less likely to believe that a black patient is suffering from serious pain and frequently hold incorrect beliefs about black skin being less likely to feel pain or even the entirely false idea that black skin is literally thicker than white skin. The fact that so many credentialed medical professionals believe these sorts of empirically false and outright ludicrous ideas about black skin is just one indicator of broader systemic failures.

Arguably the most disturbing racial disparities can be found in maternal and infant mortality. While residents of the United States regardless of racial or ethnic background are more likely to die due to pregnancy-related complications or within a year of birth than residents of other wealthy countries, communities of color are plagued by extremely high rates in both categories. According to data from Kansas Health Matters, black infants in the state from 2016-2020 had a mortality rate of 12.9 per 1000, as opposed to 4.8 for white infants and 6.0 overall. Additionally, a December 2020 report from the Kansas Maternal Mortality Review Committee shows that women of color (especially black women) were significantly more likely from 2016-2019 to suffer from one or more severe maternal morbidities or to die within a year of pregnancy than white women.

The tendency for people of color to distrust and avoid medical treatment has been well documented. Such a mindset becomes far more sensible with either personal experience or at least an awareness of the barriers discussed above and many others beyond the scope of one newsletter. Community Health Workers are in a unique position to remedy racial inequities in health care due to their role as ambassadors to underserved communities. Personal action to undercut common forms of racial discrimination can go a long way to building trust between medical providers and communities of color.

*Additional Resources:*

Sandhya Somashekhar, "[The disturbing reason some African American patients may be undertreated for pain](#)," *The Washington Post*, April 4, 2016.

Sophie Trawalter, "[Black Americans are Systematically Under-Treated for Pain. Why?](#)," University of Virginia Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, June 30, 2020.

Sophie Trawalter, "[Doctors Are More Likely to Describe Black Patients as Uncooperative, Studies Find](#)," *The New York Times*, February 16, 2022.

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## NEWS & EVENTS



## INCREASE THE REACH GRANT AWARDEES

Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute (WSU CEI) is helping the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) distribute funds to clinics and organizations with the goals of:

- Increasing vaccine rates and/or
- Decreasing vaccine hesitancy.

In Round Two, \$1,189,606 in grant funds were awarded to the following organizations:

- Care Beyond the Boulevard in Kansas City, KS
- Heartland Medical Clinic, Inc. in Lawrence, KS
- Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition in Manhattan, KS
- Common Ground Producers and Growers, Inc. in Wichita, KS
- Vibrant Health in Kansas City, KS
- La Familia Senior Community Center in Wichita, KS
- Wichita Black Nurses Association in Wichita, KS

For more information about the projects, check out:  
<https://www.increasethereach.com/awards>

RFPs are currently open! Applications will be accepted until funding is expended. To learn more about the grant opportunity and how to apply, [click here!](#)

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**We are updating our website and would love to hear from you!**

We are working on updating the <https://kschw.org/> website and would love to get your input.

Please click below and share your thoughts on how we can make the website a more useful resource for you!

[Website Survey](#)

## COMMITTEE UPDATES



**The Executive Committee** discussed credentialing in Kansas for CHWs and the importance. They outlined a timeline for certificate completion, set goals and addressed how those goals would be managed.

**The Advocacy/Sustainability Committee** - The Advocacy Committee continues to focus on supporting local health departments given the influx of COVID cases and continue to encourage community members to get vaccinated. The Sustainability Committee dove deeper to discuss the development of the business case for CHWs. The APHA business case was used as a model to frame the work. Synergy with the coalition and KDHE as stakeholders are essential in sharing the importance CHWs hold in the public health space. There is great attention needed in how the story and reputation of CHWs is reflected in the community. More ideas to come!

**The Symposium Committee** spent a great deal of time going through the details in preparation for the 2022 KSCHW Symposium to be held at Wichita State University on June 9, 2022. The committee outlined ideas for guest speakers, sponsorship opportunities and took into account COVID precautions, ASL needs, and other logistics. We would like this event to be as inclusive as possible for those coming to the in-person event.

**The Education Committee** is taking a closer look at professional development and the creation of online seminar content. Challenges CHWs are running into during this time hone in more on telehealth, access to care, chronic disease management, etc. There is a need for specific CHW barriers that need addressed. Cohorts for the spring session are underway. There is a need to evolve cohort content to include bilingual translations. The committee is exploring what materials can be converted at this time.

For more information about Kansas CHW Coalition meeting dates please contact [janeschia.wilson@wichita.edu](mailto:janeschia.wilson@wichita.edu).

# KANSAS CITY REGIONAL CHW COLLABORATIVE

Have you participated in the Kansas City Regional CHW Collaborative meetings? The mission of this collaborative is to integrate CHWs into the health and human services systems through capacity building, advocacy, and sustainability. You find more information [here](#) or contact Hannayd Ruiz at [hruiz@marc.org](mailto:hruiz@marc.org).



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