



New Reports Unveil Practical Solutions for Local Governments to Improve Health in Communities

Today, 30 percent of Kansas adults are obese, which increases their risk of stroke, type 2 diabetes and cancers such as endometrial, breast and colon. Communities throughout the state are finding new solutions to create healthy schools, neighborhoods and workplaces. Two new reports funded by the Kansas Health Foundation and conducted by the Public Health Law Center (PHLC) provide local Kansas government important recommendations and direction on how to impact two major determinants of health for a community: increasing access to healthy food, and increasing biking and walking.

The "Increasing Access to Healthy Food" report is available at <http://bit.ly/1zowumQ>, and the "Increasing Walking & Bicycling report" is available at <http://bit.ly/1zowzH9>.

"Health problems in Kansas are not set in stone," said Mary Marrow, staff attorney for Public Health Law Center. "Each community has the power to support lifestyles that are more physically active and provide greater access to healthier food. These reports show



HHN Leadership recently held meetings in downtown Topeka to explain HHN initiatives to local leaders.

that the answers are local. We can solve the problems with the choices we make, and the way we structure our communities."

Supporting active living and healthy eating at the city and county level can have a tremendous impact on Kansas communities. From supporting economic development by attracting residents, business and tourists, to connecting local producers (sources of fresh, local, and healthy foods) and growing local economies, there are important benefits to creating healthy environments for Kansas families. A few suggestions from the report include:

Increasing Access to Healthy Food:

- Establishing a local Food Policy Council
- Nutritional Standards for food served in government spaces and public places
- Incentivizing new grocery stores, farmer's markets and mobile Food Businesses

Increasing Walking and Biking:

- Creating a community Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan
- Requiring safer road/sidewalk design for driving, bicycling and walking
- Implementing safe routes to school initiatives for children

These reports are supported by a \$2.2 million grant Healthy Communities Initiative (HCI) grant from the Kansas Health Foundation, which is a statewide effort to support more than 20 counties for the health and wellness of all citizens, with the ultimate goal of using policy change to improve each community.

Heartland Healthy Neighborhoods (HHN) is a HCI grant recipient that is working with partners across

the county to increase walking and biking through an improved built environment that includes Complete Streets. HHN has also developed the Community Health Improvement Plan to address obesity, access and knowledge of health care, and infant mortality in Shawnee County that will be released in April 2015.

"It is our goal to see a positive change in the future of Shawnee County by convening partners on health issues, facilitating the conversation and advocating for change," said Lissa Staley, HHN Leadership Member and Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library Health Information Librarian.

To arrange interviews with Heartland Healthy Neighborhoods Leadership Team, please email Lissa Staley: estaley@tscpl.org.

About the Heartland Healthy Neighborhoods

Heartland Healthy Neighborhoods' mission is to mobilize the community to take action on health priorities so that policy, environment, and practice influences a culture shift toward health and wellness for everyone in Shawnee County.



CONTACT: Lissa Staley
Heartland Healthy Neighborhoods
estaley@tscpl.org