



Kansas Connecting Communities



Annual Report
2024-2025

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Erin Bider, MD

Kansas Connecting Communities Medical Director

I am proud to reflect on a year of continued growth and impact for Kansas Connecting Communities. Our perinatal access line has expanded its reach, providing vital mental health expertise to primary care providers, obstetricians, midwives, doulas, and therapists throughout Kansas. By supporting these frontline providers with training, screening tools, and real-time clinical guidance, we are helping to bridge the gap created by the shortage of perinatal psychiatrists in our state. This work is critical, as mental health conditions remain a leading cause of morbidity and mortality during pregnancy and the first year postpartum, both in Kansas and across the nation. We are honored to support those caring for mothers and families, and deeply grateful for your ongoing commitment to our mission.

The Need



1 in 5

Kansas women
are impacted by perinatal
behavioral health conditions.

Perinatal behavioral health conditions, including mental health and substance use disorders, are the most common complications of pregnancy and childbirth. Perinatal behavioral health disorders may begin during pregnancy or the first year postpartum and may affect the health and well-being of the whole family. More than one quarter of pregnancy-associated deaths in Kansas between 2016 and 2022 were caused by homicide, suicide, mental health conditions, or unintentional poisoning/overdose. Suicide and overdose are the leading causes of death for women in the first year following pregnancy.

Our Approach

Kansas Connecting Communities (KCC) recognizes the need for improved systems of care that support timely access to quality behavioral health care for all perinatal women in Kansas. KCC empowers physicians, clinicians, and other care professionals to identify and address perinatal behavioral health conditions.

KCC offers expert support to navigate identification, diagnosis, treatment, and referral for perinatal behavioral health concerns. Through consultations, care coordination support, training, and technical assistance, we ensure that professionals have what they need to deliver quality, compassionate care for every patient.



*KCC empowers physicians,
clinicians, and other care
professionals to identify and
address perinatal behavioral
health conditions.*

Consultation and Care Coordination Support

Our multidisciplinary consultation team is comprised of a diverse set of professionals who are available to provide case-based consultation and connection to behavioral health resources and referrals:

- 2 perinatal psychiatrists
- 1 Ob/Gyn with a Perinatal Mental Health Certification
- 1 perinatal clinical psychologist
- 1 licensed social worker

Training

KCC offers a wide selection of training opportunities to equip Kansas professionals with the knowledge and skills they need to identify and address perinatal behavioral health conditions. From live webinars, on-demand learning, and customized training options available, we offer an option to fit any schedule and topics that cover a range of critical behavioral health issues in pregnancy and postpartum.

A Million Moments to Prevent Maternal Mortality

On August 7 and 8, 2025, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, in partnership with KCC, welcomed 239 professionals from healthcare, behavioral health, and community organizations to a 2-day conference on physical and mental health, substance use, and intimate partner violence, which are the leading causal and contributing factors of maternal mortality and morbidity in Kansas. Integration of these focus areas across three session tracks ensured that each professional was equipped with the knowledge and tools they need to contribute their vital piece of the puzzle and strengthen the collaborative system that makes comprehensive, life-saving care possible.

"I left the conference with a strong desire as a social worker, mother, and someone who has given birth, to do more for the perinatal and postpartum populations."

"Every touch and interaction matters. Make the most of all of the moments with clients. Listen and be present."

"I will not be afraid to ask the questions. I will put my own bias aside to better serve the patients and families; I will better respect those who are survivors of substance use disorders!"



Technical Assistance

We provide clinics, hospitals, and community health organizations with customized support for integrating behavioral health screening and treatment into practice. Through tailored policy development, workflow optimization, and administrative support tools, we empower care teams to confidently and consistently meet the behavioral health needs of pregnant and postpartum patients.

Supporting Infant and Toddler Services of Kansas (Part C) Programs

In response to an increased focus on addressing parent mental health needs in early childhood services, KCC launched a training initiative to strengthen perinatal mental health capacity within Infant and Toddler Services of Kansas programs. The program developed and implemented a structured Learning Collaborative in Summer 2025, combining weekly training sessions with technical assistance office hours over seven weeks. Through this model, 28 participating programs gained:

- Foundational perinatal mental health training for coordinators and providers, with over 160 trained across programs.
- Guidance to create and implement maternal mental health screening policies.
- Support to establish referral partnerships and navigate Medicaid reimbursement for maternal depression screening.
- Tools for ongoing evaluation and quality improvement of screening and referral processes.



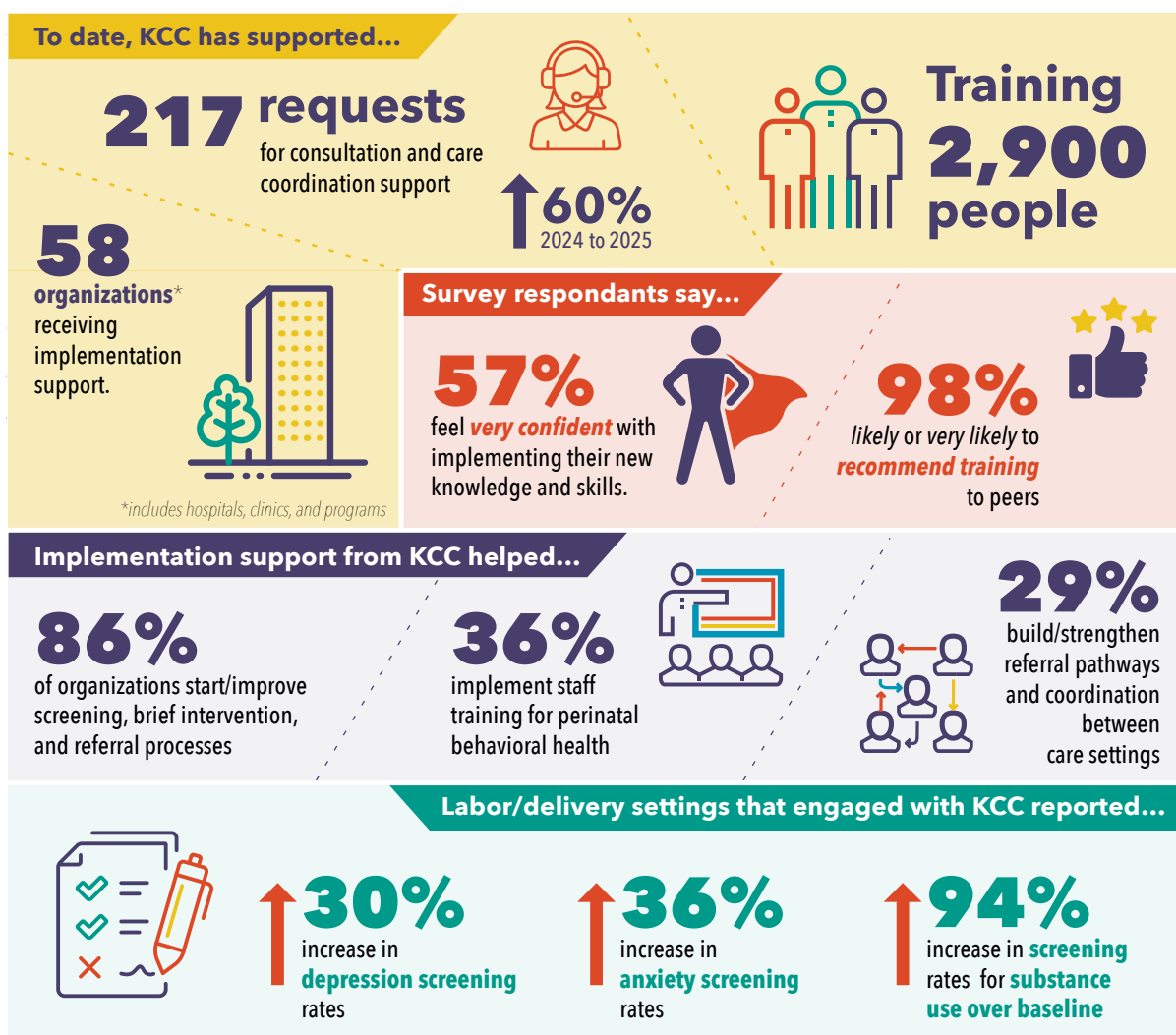
Looking ahead, evaluation data from this Learning Collaborative will inform the design of future training initiatives, ensuring targeted support for priority provider cohorts and expanding the statewide perinatal behavioral health workforce.

Measuring Progress: Engagement & Impact

384 Kansas professionals have signed up for KCC from program implementation in 2018 to date. Professionals who have signed up and engaged in KCC services report increased confidence in:

- Discussing depression/anxiety and their treatment with patients
- Accessing sufficient referral options for depression/anxiety treatment
- Providing education on substance use
- Monitoring and adjusting medications for substance use disorders, including Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)
- Transitioning the patient to ongoing/follow-up Substance Use Disorder (SUD) care

"I have nothing but complimentary things to say about the service. The providers and staff are great to work with and very helpful and engaging."



Mental Health Consultation & Resource Network

Psychiatric Access for Kansas

The Kansas Mental Health Consultation and Resource Network is a collaborative of psychiatric access programs in Kansas. KSKidsMAP and KCC aim to improve access to pediatric and perinatal mental health care for children, adolescents and birthing moms across Kansas. This is accomplished by making resources, tools, and case consultations accessible to physicians and clinicians within the state. Professionals can now sign up for one or both programs through a streamlined enrollment process.

1-800-332-6262



Mental Health
Consultation
& Resource
Network

Empowering clinicians. Elevating patient care.

A Kansas Department of Health and Environment Program

Strategic Growth & Future Direction

In the coming year, KCC will prioritize long-term sustainability and growth through targeted provider outreach and increased access to quality consultation and training. In collaboration with KSKidsMAP, KCC will work to secure sustainable funding for the Mental Health Consultation & Resource Network, a critical step toward continuation of the program's valuable services without disruption in the face of uncertain future funding.

While pursuing sustainable funding, KCC will continue to provide the key services Kansas care professionals have come to rely on, including:



Targeted Training Opportunities

Geared toward
Family Medicine
Physicians



Implementation Support Office Hours

Newly-offered service
from our Technical
Assistance Team.



Continued Promotion

Work to promote consultation
and care coordination support
activities, a value to all who
work with perinatal women.

These efforts will be informed by data, outcomes-focused, and grounded in best practices for high-quality perinatal behavioral health care. Additionally, in collaboration with KDHE and other partners, KCC will hold the second annual Maternal Mortality Prevention Conference. Following the success of the [*2025 A Million Moments for Maternal Mortality Prevention conference*](#), the 2026 conference will play a critical role in equipping cross-disciplinary professionals with the knowledge, tools, and connections needed to address perinatal behavioral health conditions and other leading causal and contributing factors of maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity in Kansas.

KCC will also prioritize the identification and development of Program Champions to advance KCC's priorities for long-term growth, including professional engagement, quality-improvement of program services, and enhanced communication strategies aligned with the Mental Health Consultation and Resource Network.

Recommendations

Secure Sustainable Funding

To maintain Kansas' momentum in improving access to perinatal and pediatric behavioral health care, stable state funding is essential. The Kansas Mental Health Consultation and Resource Network (MHCRN) has demonstrated a strong return on investment by connecting over 1,000 clinicians, facilitating 1,200+ consultations, and training 2,800+ professionals statewide. With federal funding for KSKidsMAP concluding in September 2026, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) has requested an annual State General Fund investment of \$1.6 million beginning in FY2027 to sustain the MHCRN. This funding will ensure uninterrupted access to expert psychiatric consultation, care coordination, and training for providers serving families across Kansas, especially those in rural and underserved areas.

Establish a Maternal Mental Health Coalition

Kansas should launch a Perinatal Behavioral Health Coalition to coordinate perinatal and early childhood behavioral health initiatives, guide policy and funding priorities, standardize screening and referral practices, and review outcome data to monitor progress. Membership should include state agencies, provider associations, academic partners, and individuals with lived experience, ensuring broad expertise and accountability. This recommendations aligns with the Governor's Behavioral Health Services Planning Council's [*Children's Subcommittee*](#) and [*KSKidsMAP*](#) recommendations.

Leverage Policy to Improve Outcomes

Kansas faces measurable gaps in maternal and infant health outcomes and clear policy and system opportunities exist for the state to move the needle. The Kansas maternal mortality rate is 22.8 deaths per 100,000 births, far above the Healthy People 2030 goal of 15.7. From 2016 to 2022, pregnancy-associated mortality ratio in Kansas rose 40%, with mental health and substance use contributing to more than half of reviewed deaths. The Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health's [2025 Kansas Report Card](#) shows Kansas earned a **D grade** for "Providers & Programs" in maternal mental health, and an **F grade** for "Screening & Screening Reimbursement," indicating shortfalls in provider ratios, continued barriers to accessing care, and inadequate screening requirements for prenatal and postpartum mental health screening.

Strengthen Data Collection and Transparency

Kansas should enhance statewide data collection and transparency for perinatal mental health and substance use by developing a publicly accessible data dashboard capturing screening rates, referral/treatment uptake, maternal and infant outcomes, and provider capacity disaggregated by geography, race/ethnicity, payer status, and timing (e.g., prenatal, postpartum, early childhood) to enable strategic resource allocation and investment. Collaboration between the Perinatal Behavioral Health Coalition and the Kansas Perinatal Quality Collaborative (KPQC) could strengthen this effort by aligning shared metrics for screening, referral, treatment access, and outcomes, and by helping ensure data are meaningful for clinical quality improvement.





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