

CITY COUNCIL INITIATIVE: **COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH**



We must take care of citizens struggling with mental health needs. To not do so ignores a public health crisis. When Market Street Services Inc. assessed our City, Topekans overwhelmingly and without solicitation noted Topeka must strengthen services assisting those with mental health care needs. When elected to the City Council, I will work with our health care community to improve this care.

KanCare Expansion: The Federal health care model is here for the foreseeable future. Kansas cannot continue to refuse federal dollars that will help Topeka serve those who need mental health services and substance abuse treatment. Topeka must be a leader in advocating for KanCare expansion, making more Topekans eligible for Medicaid.

Incentives: The City should develop incentives that encourage mental health professionals to dedicate a percentage of time to community mental health services. This is a cost-effective way to ensure professionals serve those in need.

Crisis Stabilization Services:

With two hospitals, Valeo and others, Topeka should have top-notch Crisis Stabilization Services. We must support current efforts and work to better develop programs. Kansas Dept. for Aging & Disability Services has a model program in Rainbow Services Inc (RSI), as a starting point.

Public Safety Training: Police Officers and Firefighters get training in assisting those with mental health struggles. However, training needs to be more comprehensive and consistent. This can be done at minimal cost alongside mental health professionals.

Pre-arrest & Post-arrest Diversion Programs: Our current alternative sentencing program is a model program and must be supported. We must reduce the criminalization of people living with mental illness through diversion programs that ensure they receive mental health services they need while being appropriately reprimanded. This is of particular importance in the juvenile justice system.

School Mental Health Services: We must work with schools to improve children's access to mental health services. This identifies needs early, ensures students are taken care of and creates more productive and safer school environments. This means broadening access to mental-health support beyond special education; building bridges between school and community programs; and ensuring schools have comprehensive mental health prevention programs. These programs respect a parent's role while conveying critical information about services.



Medicaid Rates: We must use the authority and voice of City Hall while working alongside health care professionals to engage state and

federal officials on policies that stabilize Medicaid rates. Billing policies must, at a minimum, allow programs to cover costs.

Restore State Grants: Topeka must make it legislative policy to support full restoration of state grants to support programs, and actively lobby the Legislature on this issue.

Reduce Administrative & Regulatory Oversight: The City must evaluate current policies to ensure they are not overly burdensome and actively support state policies that reduce administrative program barriers.

Stop Taking Assets: The City must ensure adequate funding and assets are provided to support essential mental health programs, and actively lobby the legislature to stop taking money and assets from these programs.

