



IMPACT KCK ASSESSMENT:

Reducing Student Homelessness
through Collective Impact

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This assessment provides a foundation for continued transformation in how student homelessness is addressed in Kansas City and Wyandotte County, Kansas. It also provides information important to funders and accountability to the community at large. Further, communities throughout the Kansas City region and across the nation wishing to replicate these efforts will find recommendations critical to their success in these pages.

IMPACT KCK'S NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED SUCCESS

Impact KCK began operations in August 2015. Since that time, more than 1,000 families have been served, 306 families have been permanently housed, and 276 individuals have become employed through Impact KCK. As a result, student homelessness in the Kansas City Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) fell nearly 50% between August 2015 and January 2018. This was achieved despite the transfer of homeless students into KCKPS from other school districts in the region, as well as out-of-state homeless students whose families arrived due to displacement during the 2017 hurricane season.

Impact KCK's success has been recognized by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEH CY), and the Public Broadcasting System's (PBS's) *Frontline* news program.¹ This success has generated interest in replication efforts not only in the Kansas City region, but in communities across the country.

IMPACT KCK IS COLLECTIVE IMPACT IN ACTION

Impact KCK's success is based on a very specific form of collaboration known as collective impact. The collective impact model for community change is a **strategic, disciplined approach** for solving complex social issues. It requires the dedicated and skillful guidance of a backbone organization that coordinates and provides partner organizations with an array of services and program supports, including:

- Management and staff with skills required to facilitate success
- The ability to attract funding
- The ability to conduct shared measurement activities
- The ability to build and maintain relationships among partners and with the community at large
- The ability to advance public policy (Turner, et al. 2012).

Avenue of Life, a Kansas City, Kansas, faith-based nonprofit organization serves as the backbone organization for Impact KCK. More than 30 partner organizations work with the backbone to create housing stability and family self-sufficiency for homeless students and their families.

A TWO-GENERATION SOLUTION

The two-generation approach is widely recognized as the most effective means for breaking the cycle of poverty. The federal Administration for Children & Families supports this approach and provides examples of successful two-generation strategies (Administration for Children & Families 2018).

Impact KCK makes very effective use of the two-generation approach. Parents or guardians receive education and assistance with employment, housing, health care, nutrition, and family budgeting through

¹ Program recognition has been made public under the names Impact KCK, Impact Wednesday, and 1400 Diplomas. Impact KCK became the official name for all aspects of the program in May 2018.

case management and classes. Children and youth are included in in-home case management discussions as appropriate. Further, children and youth participate in family budgeting and nutrition classes with their parent or guardian.

The two-generation approach works in multiple ways to break the cycle of poverty. First, parents or guardians receive the life skills training and other assistance necessary to provide a stable home for their family. Second, the parent or guardian's journey to self-sufficiency serves as a role model for their children. Finally, children and youth learn essential skills and behaviors for avoiding poverty once they reach adulthood by participating in appropriate aspects of case management and classes in family budgeting and nutrition.

KEY FACTORS IN IMPACT KCK'S SUCCESS

Many ingredients combine to make Impact KCK successful in ending student homelessness. The most critical factors in this success are:

- An accurate understanding of the causes of student and family homelessness
- Skillful and disciplined application of the collective impact model for community change
- A backbone organization with both capacity and commitment
- Partner organizations representing all sectors and providing an array of services necessary to address the root causes of student and family homelessness
- Permanent housing solutions
- A single point of service ("one-stop shop")
- Intensive case management with a single professional serving as system navigator for each homeless family
- Providing clients continuing access to services through the high school graduation of the family's youngest child

REPLICATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Successful replication of the Impact KCK program requires commitment to the application of the collective impact model for community change, a strong backbone organization, and dedicated partners. In addition, it is vital that replicating communities adopt the practices presented above as Key Factors in Impact KCK's Success, including permanent housing solutions and intensive case management that provides a single navigator for each family.

Experience shows that initiatives failing to execute based on these key factors are likely to achieve only partial success. Each community will customize their approach based on local conditions, but the key factors for success should be a part of their program.



INTRODUCTION

Kansas City, Kansas, is one of thousands of communities across the country with students experiencing homelessness. Student homelessness in the United States more than doubled between 2007 and 2014 (Ingram, et al. 2016, 4). Further, the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) reports that there were more than 1.3 million homeless students in pre-K through grade 12 in the 2015-2016 school year (NCHE 2017). Despite the size of this critical public policy problem, school homeless liaisons and state homeless education coordinators report that “student homelessness remains an invisible and extremely disruptive problem,” and the problem is “compounded by the lack of awareness of the issue in many communities.” (Ingram, et al. 2016, 4)

KANSAS COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP ENTERPRISE

The Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) asked community development leader Robert Woodson of the Woodson Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and his team to teach at a number of events held throughout the state. These events focused on the power of collaboration and grassroots leadership in creating local solutions for community problems as part of the agency’s Kansas Community Leadership Enterprise (KCLE) program. DCF’s Faith Based and Community Initiatives’ leadership asked Avenue of Life to hold a KCLE Woodson event in their Wyandotte County Equipping Center in Fall 2014.

Representatives from Avenue of Life, DCF, and many other organizations began meeting bi-weekly in preparation for the Woodson event. They recruited individual leaders and organizations to be part of the effort so that when the KCLE Woodson event was held in early 2015, representatives of more than 80 agencies were in attendance.

Over the course of the two-day event, representatives of these agencies discussed the state of Wyandotte County, eventually narrowing their focus to eradicating child poverty, increasing high school graduation rates, and decreasing dependence on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The 80 agencies’ representatives chose the name KCLE and asked Desiree Monize, Avenue of Life’s Executive Director/CEO, to serve as the collaborative network’s leader.

The KCLE group determined it would host a weekly event at Avenue of Life to provide wrap-around emergency services to Wyandotte families. Partnering agencies would work together under one roof with mobile offices. This weekly event eventually became known as Impact Wednesday. Weekly events are now known as Impact KCK Wednesday sessions.

CALL TO ACTION

In May 2015 Mayor Mark Holland and the Kansas City Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) issued a Call to Action to serve the 1,400 homeless infants and children they identified within the KCKPS district boundaries. Avenue of Life’s CEO and Westside Family Church’s pastor were invited to the Call to Action and brought information about it back to the KCLE collaborative group.

The intent of the Call to Action was to mobilize community stakeholders to assist homeless children identified under the McKinney-Vento Act within KCKPS (US District 500). The original plan was for three agencies to oversee three groups of activities falling within certain “buckets” of responsibility:

1. Emergency Relief/Removal of Barriers
2. Housing
3. Advocacy/Policy

KCLE members voted to lead the Emergency Relief/Removal of Barriers bucket for what became known as the 1400 Diplomas program, based on reference to the 1,400 homeless infants and children identified within the boundaries of KCKPS. The lead agencies for the Housing and Advocacy/Policy buckets were unable to gain traction, however, and all three areas of responsibility were placed under KCLE with lead agency Avenue of Life providing oversight and coordination.

Based on the recommendation of Avenue of Life's CEO, KCLE adopted the **collective impact model** for social change. Collective impact is a **very specific form of disciplined, strategic collaboration** that relies on a strong lead agency to serve as the backbone organization, taking on oversight and other responsibilities necessary for effective collaboration. KCLE designated Avenue of Life as the backbone agency for their collaborative efforts.

IMPACT KCK

KCLE launched Impact KCK² in August 2015 with the KCKPS McKinney-Vento Liaison's referral of all homeless families to be served by the program. Impact KCK is hosted at Avenue of Life every Wednesday during the school year. Further, full wrap-around services are provided by Avenue of Life staff throughout the week.

Impact KCK agencies work together in fundraising, and each organization has an extensive base of community partners that contribute to the program's success through volunteer labor, in-kind donations, and word-of-mouth referrals to Avenue of Life and Impact KCK. In implementing Impact KCK through the collective impact model, KCLE executive team members continue to meet monthly. The monthly sessions facilitate timely action to overcome barriers to solutions for homeless families, as well as

the identification of emerging issues within the community and the design of appropriate interventions.

As collective impact backbone organization, Avenue of Life fills in gaps in the collaborative's fundraising and offers support to Impact KCK partner organizations for their own fundraising efforts. The backbone hires staff dedicated to the collaborative's goals and works to keep the vision at the forefront of team efforts to ensure that Impact KCK goals are accomplished.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report is the result of an assessment of Impact KCK and is intended to provide readers with (1) an analysis of how the program produces success for homeless students and families; (2) information for transparency and accountability; and (3) essential recommendations for replication in other communities.

PROJECT SPONSOR

The William T. Kemper Foundation provided funding for this assessment. The William T. Kemper Foundation also provided funding for the creation of an Impact KCK Toolkit. The Toolkit provides information essential for replicating Impact KCK in other communities.

L.P. COOKINGHAM INSTITUTE OF URBAN AFFAIRS

The L.P. Cookingham Institute of Urban Affairs in the Henry W. Bloch School of Management at the University of Missouri-Kansas City conducted Impact KCK assessment activities from July 2017 to May 2018 and prepared this report. The Cookingham Institute also prepared the Impact KCK Toolkit.

² Impact KCK is used to represent both current program activities and activities previously conducted under the names Impact Wednesday and 1400 Diplomas. Effective May 2018, all activities under the Impact KCK umbrella are known by this single program name.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

By the end of the 2015-2016 school year, Impact KCK had gained national recognition for its effectiveness in ending student and family homelessness. Further recognition continues to date. Among the sources of recognition are the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEH CY), and the Public Broadcasting System's (PBS's) *Frontline* program.³

The Cookingham Institute was asked to prepare an assessment focused on the key factors explaining Impact KCK's success. Research methods that facilitate greater understanding of the ingredients of recognized program success were carefully selected and include **appreciative inquiry** and **case study**.

Appreciative inquiry is a strengths-based approach to organizational development and change management. The approach recognizes that the visible presence of success is a signal that elements of optimal functioning are present within a management system. Further, identification and analysis of the elements of optimal function can be used as a basis to bring about not just positive results, but transformation (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Thus, using the appreciative inquiry approach is very useful when seeking the critical factors generating success in a program such as Impact KCK.

The **case study** method is a form of empirical analysis that may be employed when seeking to understand a real-life phenomenon and its context; the method is often used to explain decisions and outcomes (Yin 2009). Therefore, combining appreciative inquiry's search for explanations of success with the case study method

provides a useful foundation for identifying the elements contributing to Impact KCK's success.

This assessment is based on both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were collected through the following sources:

- U.S. Census Bureau
- Kansas State Department of Education
- Kansas City Kansas Public Schools
- Avenue of Life

Qualitative data were gathered from document analysis, interviews, and observation. Document analysis provided information on Impact KCK's implementation and results found in program history documents, flow charts, and other graphical representations of program functioning, as well as the curriculum used in educating Impact KCK families.

Interviews were conducted with KCKPS officials, Avenue of Life management and staff, and community stakeholders. Finally, the assessment team observed Impact KCK functioning on multiple occasions, including monthly KCLE meetings, Impact KCK weekly service provision (Wednesdays), and day-to-day operations.

KANSAS CITY AND WYANDOTTE COUNTY

Kansas City, Kansas, is part of the Unified Government of Kansas City and Wyandotte County. With an estimated population of more than 165,000 in 2017, Wyandotte County is the poorest of the 105 counties in Kansas, with nearly 24% of the population in poverty. Further, the community has a growing Hispanic population, which reached more than 28% in 2017. Hispanic families in Kansas City, Kansas, often have language barriers and other challenges that must be overcome in order to make permanent housing and educational success possible

³ Program recognition has been made public under the names Impact KCK, Impact Wednesday, and 1400 Diplomas. Impact KCK became the official name for all aspects of the program in May 2018.

for their children. Thus, it is important to understand Wyandotte County’s demographics when seeking to address community challenges, including student homelessness.

KANSAS CITY KANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Kansas City Kansas Public Schools served 22,519 students in pre-K through grade 12 in the 2017-2018 school year. Eighty-six percent of KCKPS students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches in 2017-2018. White, non-Hispanic students made up 13.3% of enrolled students, while African-American enrollment was 29.8% of the total. Hispanic students represented 50.3% of the student body in 2017-2018. Asian, Native American, and multi-ethnic students accounted for the remaining enrollment.



IMPACT KCK PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This section includes information on the collective impact model for community change as the basis for Impact KCK and the program’s leadership. It also provides information on Impact KCK services and how they are provided.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE

Impact KCK is based on the collective impact model for community change. Introduced in 2011 by John Kania and Mark Kramer, the collective impact model relies on a shared vision of the policy problem and its remedies, a shared measurement system, and coordination by a central organization with sufficient capacity to facilitate program success. More specifically, collective impact conditions include:

1. Common agenda
2. Shared measurement system
3. Mutually reinforcing activities
4. Continuous communication
5. Backbone organization (Kania and Kramer 2011)

Collective impact is distinguished from isolated impact through its emphasis on these five conditions. Isolated impact describes situations where organizations are working in “silos,” often unaware that another organization is also working to address the same community problem. Even the most well-intentioned isolated impact efforts are unlikely to create long-term success—and often, any success at all—because social problems are complex and require well-coordinated multi-sector action if they are to be overcome.

Despite its relatively brief history, collective impact has been used not just throughout the U.S., but around the world to clean up rivers, improve educational outcomes, help public housing residents get jobs, reduce crime, end homelessness, and address other social problems (Walzer and Weaver 2019; Hanleybrown, Kania, and Kramer 2012). While all partners are an important part of collective impact success, the critical role of the backbone organization must be emphasized. The backbone organization facilitates program success by coordinating communications among partners, undertaking the performance measurement function, facilitating the work of partners in conducting mutually reinforcing activities, and filling in gaps in performance when they arise.

IMPACT KCK BACKBONE ORGANIZATION: AVENUE OF LIFE

Avenue of Life is the backbone organization for both KCLE and Impact KCK. Its mission is to help low-income families become self-sufficient. It accomplishes this mission by mobilizing the community to equip and empower low-income families. Impact KCK is one of several programs offered by Avenue of Life aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty through community development.

As a nonprofit organization under 501(c)3 provisions of the Internal Revenue Code, Avenue of Life is governed by a board of directors and led by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/Executive Director. Desiree Monize has served as CEO since the organization was established in 2013. Avenue of Life employs staff totaling 24 full-time equivalents (FTEs), including interns. Further, several partner organizations provide staffing on-site at Avenue of Life, contributing another 3.75 FTEs to overall staffing. Avenue of Life's organizational capacity also includes 11.25 FTEs in volunteer efforts providing administrative support and class instruction. Finally, 3,042 people provide volunteer services annually in Avenue of Life's on-site incubator.

The six-member Board of Directors is led by Pastor Matt Adams of Westside Family Church. The Board includes faith-based leaders and a local government elected official. In addition to the Board of Directors, Avenue of Life operates with the benefit of an eleven-member Advisory Board co-chaired by Julie Cain, Leawood City Council Member, and Ted and Deni Davis, Founder and CEO of Grace Strategic Services, Inc. The Advisory Board includes community leaders representative of public, private, and nonprofit organizations.

Avenue of Life operates two facilities. Its main office and Equipping Center is located at 500 N. 7th Street Trafficway, Kansas City, Kansas. A Business Training Center with a mattress recycling facility is located in Kansas City, Missouri.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Impact KCK includes more than 30 partner organizations. Many partners provide on-site services while others work off-site. Impact KCK includes partners working across 16 domains adapted from the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix. Introduced to partners by Metro Lutheran Ministry, the matrix includes domains that represent areas of family or individual functioning such as housing, food, childcare, and other necessary aspects of a stable, healthy life.

As with any community initiative based on collaboration across organizations, some partners are more active than others. Further, there are times when partner organizations may reduce their participation or exit the program. Other organizations may enter at various points in the life of a program. Information provided here on Impact KCK partner organizations is as of January 2018. Table 1 provides a list of partner organizations, their domains, and the services they offer as part of Impact KCK.

Table 1: Impact KCK Partners

AGENCY NAME	DOMAINS	SERVICES
Avenue of Life	All Domains	Backbone Organization, Wrap-around Services, Rental Assistance, Utility Assistance, Gas Cards/Bus Passes, Car Payment Assistance, Weekly Dinners/Saturday Breakfast/Impact KCK Lunch, Summer Camps, On-Site Counselor, Fines/Eviction Payments, Dave Ramsey Classes, Project Strength Classes, Case Management Staff, Data Collection & Dissemination
Alliance Workforce	Employment, Life Skills	Impact KCK Worker, Employment Placement, Employment Education, Translation Services
Blessings Abound Thrift Store	Community Involvement, Social Support	Furniture Donations
Brothers in Blue Reentry	Community Involvement, Social Support	Hygiene Products, Gift Cards
Caring for Kids Kansas City	Life Skills, Community Involvement, Social Support	ESL Classes, Translation Support
Catholic Charities	Housing	Utility Assistance
Colonial Presbyterian	Community Involvement, Social Support	Food Donations
Community Health Council of Wyandotte	Healthcare Coverage	Community Health Worker
Duchesne Clinic	Healthcare Coverage	Healthcare Services
Economic Opportunity Foundation, Inc	Employment, Income	Impact KCK Worker, Utility Assistance, Employment
El Centro Inc	Community Involvement, Social Support	Utility Assistance, Birth Certificates
First Hand Foundation	Healthcare Coverage	Healthcare Education
Happy Bottoms	Parenting Skills	Diaper Bank
Harvesters	Food	Nutrition Education, Food Support
Heartland 180	Community Involvement, Social Support	Impact KCK Worker, Youth Program, Strengthening Families
Junior League of Kansas City, Missouri	Food	Food Donations
Kansas City Kansas Community College	Adult Education	GED Classes
Kansas City Kansas Housing Authority	Housing	Housing Assistance
Kansas City Kansas Public Schools	Children's Education, Adult Education, Life Skills, Mobility, Community Involvement, Social Support	Referrals, Intern Support, Unaccompanied Youth
Kansas City Young Matrons	Food, Community Involvement, Social Support	Food Donations
Kansas Department for Children and Families	Income, Food, Childcare	Impact KCK Worker, Food stamps (SNAP), TANF, Childcare
KC Care Clinic	Healthcare Coverage	Impact KCK Worker, Case Management Support
KVC Health Systems	Healthcare Coverage, Life Skills, Parenting Skills, Mental Health, Safety	Case Management Support
Mattie Rhodes Center	Family Relations, Mental Health, Safety	DV Navigational Support
McCrummen Immigration Law Group	Legal	Legal Support/Consultation
Metro Lutheran Ministry	Housing, Life Skills, Mobility, Safety	Case Manager, Housing Assistance, Utility Assistance, Summer Camp
Mt Carmel Redevelopment Corp	Housing	Housing Assistance
NBC Community Development Corporation	Healthcare Coverage, Community Involvement, Social Support	Healthcare Networking
Nourish KC (formerly Episcopal Community Services)	Food	Food Donations
Rachel's Tea House	Community Involvement, Social Support	Pregnant Teen Support Group
Salvation Army Pathway of Hope	Community Involvement, Social Support	Utility Assistance, Transitional Housing
Structured Support LLC	Family Relations, Parenting Skills, Mental Health	Trauma Consultation, Parenting Class, Youth Program
United Methodist Church of the Resurrection	Food, Mobility, Community Involvement, Social Support	Gift Cards, Clothing Donations, Food Donations, Furniture Donations, Car Repair Assistance
Vibrant Health Wyandotte	Healthcare Coverage, Family Relations, Mental Health	Healthcare Education, Clinic Support
Village Initiative	Mental Health	AA Group, Reentry Support
Westside Family Church	Food, Mobility, Community Involvement, Social Support	Bus Passes, Gift Cards, Pastoral Support
Wyandotte County Sherriff's Department	Community Involvement, Social Support	Clothing & Hygiene Items Donations

PARTNERS IN ACTION

All Impact KCK partners contribute to the program's success. This section provides examples of how partners found in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors contribute to Impact KCK success.

Kansas Department for Children and Families. The Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) has been an integral part of Impact KCK from the start and serves as an example of how state government can make a difference by supporting community efforts to address complex issues such as child and family homelessness. DCF representatives have been at every KCLE meeting and at every Impact KCK weekly service event since the program began.

DCF's consistent, visible support of this program was not only instrumental in its genesis, it continues to serve as a tangible reminder of the agency's commitment to addressing complex issues facing children and families in Kansas.

Further, DCF's continuous involvement in Impact KCK makes it possible for barriers to family housing stability and self-sufficiency to be overcome in an expedited fashion. For instance, when KCLE members found that parents were losing jobs newly gained through Impact KCK due to the 30-day waiting period for child-care vouchers, DCF waived this requirement for Impact KCK families. Without the waiting period, families experience new-found stability in employment and are ready for stable housing opportunities.

Alliance Workforce. Alliance Workforce has also been an Impact KCK partner from the beginning and provides a strong example of how the private sector can make a real difference in communities. With multiple offices in the Kansas City region and its central office in Kansas City, Kansas, Alliance

Workforce specializes in temporary and permanent employment services for both employers and workers.

Alliance goes much further than simply connecting Impact KCK parents with an employer. Because many of these parents may not have the life skills required to hold a steady job, Alliance's management provides instruction in getting and keeping a job.

This instruction is provided in one of the required Impact KCK classes as well as in one-on-one sessions with Impact KCK parents and guardians. For example, the Alliance instructor provides guidance to job-seeking adults on the importance of setting an alarm clock and being regular in their attendance if they are to keep their jobs and make advancement possible. Teaching this simple life skill—and being willing to support it by making wake-up calls when necessary for new Impact KCK adults—is one example of a private-sector firm going well beyond what might normally be expected in order to ensure the success of Impact KCK families. Homeless children gain housing stability when parents are supported in their employment-seeking and advancement activities, and this stability provides a foundation for children's educational success.

Economic Opportunity Foundation, Inc. Economic Opportunity Foundation, Inc. (EOF) has been a part of Kansas City and Wyandotte County, Kansas, for more than 50 years. EOF is a nonprofit organization committed to helping people achieve self-sufficiency. This partner organization brings a long-standing network of local agencies and churches to its work in providing emergency assistance and services targeting employment and housing.

EOF representatives have been consistently involved with KCLE and Impact KCK from the first meeting with Robert Woodson and

his team. As an Impact KCK partner, EOF is a role model for other partner organizations; it also brings social capital to Impact KCK and the families it serves. EOF's long-term knowledge of Wyandotte County, its people, and its economic trends provides important context for Impact KCK decision making and in-kind support for KCLE, Avenue of Life, and all Impact KCK partners.

IMPACT KCK FUNDING

Impact KCK is primarily funded through private sources, including churches, nonprofit organizations, philanthropic foundations, and individuals. Further, Impact KCK families benefit from a wide array of donated services and items.

Donated services are provided by partners, churches, and other community stakeholders and include case management, mental health counseling, legal assistance, classroom instruction, and more. Donated items are provided by partners, churches, and other community stakeholders in the form of food, clothing, diapers, furniture, kitchen necessities, personal hygiene products, and school supplies.

HOW FAMILIES ARE SERVED

Two-Generation Approach. Impact KCK provides a two-generation approach for homeless families. The two-generation approach can also be described as a “whole family” approach to ending homelessness and breaking the cycle of poverty.

The two-generation approach is widely recognized as an effective means for breaking the cycle of poverty. For instance, the federal Administration for Children & Families (ACF) has expressed its commitment to two-generation solutions and provides information on using the two-generation approach on its website (Administration for Children & Families 2018).

Parents and Guardians. Children and youth cannot experience stability and break out of poverty unless the needs of their parents or guardians for employment, health care, and housing are addressed. Adults who attain stable housing and employment and take care of their health are better able to provide stability for their children. Their journey to self-sufficiency also provides an important role model for their children.

Children and Youth. Further, Impact KCK children and youth learn many essential life skills through case management and participation in Impact KCK classes. When case managers meet with families in their homes, children and youth are included in discussions as appropriate. Children and youth also learn critical skills through the Dave Ramsey Financial Peace and Nutrition classes.

Including children and youth in appropriate case management discussions and in classes on family budgeting and nutrition are powerful means to break the cycle of poverty. Learning essential life skills and behaviors early means that they will have the tools necessary to avoid poverty when they reach adulthood.

Intake. The Kansas City Kansas Public Schools' McKinney-Vento liaison identifies homeless students and refers the student and their family to the Impact KCK program. Homeless families take their referral to an Impact KCK Wednesday session at Avenue of Life, where partner organizations provide both immediate emergency interventions and longer-term assistance.

Referrals. The Impact KCK Director reviews KCKPS referrals and assigns students and families to a case manager. Clients receive a telephone call from the Impact KCK Director or a case manager to set up their initial appointment.

If all case managers' caseloads are full, clients are placed on a waiting list. *Wait-listed clients are eligible to receive all forms of Impact KCK assistance, including being eligible to attend Impact KCK Wednesday sessions, receive emergency assistance, get help in accessing programs such as SNAP and TANF, receive help in securing a job, and have opportunities to take all classes offered. The only resource for which wait-listed families experience a delay is intensive case management.*

In other words, waiting list families may attend Impact KCK Wednesday sessions, receive temporary housing assistance, assistance in accessing state-administered programs such as SNAP, TANF, and child care vouchers, employment services, health care access, and education in critical life skills through the Impact KCK classes. If waiting list families experience a crisis or are otherwise in need of greater assistance prior to being assigned a case manager, they are instructed to call Avenue of Life for help in addressing the situation. *Many Impact KCK families are successful in reaching housing stability and self-sufficiency through the array of services and resources provided to waiting-list clients.*

Impact KCK Wednesday Sessions.

New clients arrive at Avenue of Life on Wednesdays and are directed to Avenue's Chapel, where they complete an orientation session facilitated by an Avenue of Life staff member. The staff member explains the session's clipboard process and what to expect at Impact KCK.

Once orientation is complete, clients meet with representatives from several agencies offering services addressing the domains of the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix. Clients are guided through the process and use their clipboards to sign off in each area. Once clients have met and signed off with representatives of all agencies listed on the clipboard, they return to the Chapel for an

exit interview with their case manager or the Impact KCK Director if they are on the waiting list. An Avenue of Life staff member follows up with any clients who have been referred by a liaison but do not attend the Wednesday program.

Exit Interview. An exit interview is conducted with each client on the day of their initial visit to Impact KCK Wednesday activities. (This exit interview is for the day's activities only, not for the entire Impact KCK program.) During the exit interview, clients who are on the waiting list are asked if they are interested in case management. If they indicate interest in receiving case management, they are encouraged to complete the four classes offered by Impact KCK.

The exit interview includes screening with the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix as adapted by KCLE for use in Impact KCK. The matrix determines an individual's self-sufficiency across multiple domains:

- Housing
- Employment
- Income
- Food
- Childcare
- Children's education
- Adult education
- Healthcare coverage
- Life skills
- Family relations
- Mobility
- Community involvement and social support
- Parenting skills
- Legal
- Mental health
- Safety

Each domain is ranked on a scale from 1 (In Crisis) to 5 (Empowered). These ratings are used to determine goals. The ratings are also used to track achievement of those goals over time while participating in the Impact KCK program.

At the close of the exit interview clients are informed about what to expect with case management and about the classes offered through Impact KCK. They are then invited to have lunch on site provided without charge by Avenue of Life.

Client Tracking. Clients turn in their clipboards to their assigned case manager before leaving Wednesday activities. The clipboard information provides Impact KCK with baseline data on each client by social service domain. This information is used to track client progress over time.

Temporary Housing Placement. Impact KCK case managers work with families to identify potential sources of temporary housing with family or friends while they work through required classes, seek employment, and get prepared to be successful in a permanent housing placement. These brainstorming sessions between the case manager and parents help families realize that they likely have some sources of social capital that will be helpful to them as they transition to a life with housing stability. Connecting with the knowledge that they have social capital of their own boosts the confidence of homeless parents and has many benefits for family functioning that facilitate success in becoming stable and self-sufficient.

Case managers make suggestions to adults about how they can increase their likelihood of success in securing temporary housing with family or friends. First, case managers recommend that homeless parents or guardians make their request based on a definite and brief time period. For instance, a homeless parent might ask a family member or close friend if they can stay with them for a week or 14 days. Requests beyond 14 days are not recommended. Providing family or friends with a brief and time-certain request is most likely to result in temporary solutions.

Second, case managers recommend that homeless families requesting shelter with family or friends make it clear that they will bring some resources with them. This might be food or personal hygiene products or some combination of resources.⁴ This works to the benefit of the homeless family in that they do not have to feel as though they are coming empty handed. Further, family members or friends who receive a request from a homeless family who not only request a brief and pre-agreed time period for shelter, but also come with some resources are more likely to be willing to agree to offer temporary housing.

Third, case managers let homeless families seeking temporary housing with family or friends know that they should indicate a willingness to help with household chores and/or child care. Again, this benefits the homeless family as well as the household providing temporary shelter, because the homeless family builds confidence by being a source of help at the same time that they are being helped.

If a homeless family is unable to access temporary housing assistance with family or friends, then temporary accommodation in a hotel or motel is provided. This is considered a last resort for two reasons. First, hotel and motel stays are expensive. Even one week in a hotel or motel will be at least \$350. Thus, the number of families who can be assisted is much smaller if commercial lodgings must be arranged and funded.

Second, families who do not work out arrangements with family or friends for temporary shelter do not reap the benefit of understanding that they do, indeed, possess social capital, and that further, they have something of themselves they can offer others even when receiving help. The give-and-take of the temporary housing solutions with family or friends encouraged by Impact KCK helps families strengthen their social

⁴ Food and hygiene products are provided by Impact KCK.

network and increases self-awareness of their own worth. These experiences enhance the growing resilience of these families as they move forward to a life of housing stability and self-sufficiency.

Required Classes. Impact KCK families receiving case management services are required to take four classes. Classes are optional for Impact KCK families on the waiting list for case management services. The four classes focus on family budgeting (Finance 101), employment (Employment 101), housing (Housing 101), and healthcare (Healthcare 101). Classes are offered weekly during the school year.

Finance 101. Clients take an in-depth look at their family budgets in Finance 101. Impact KCK's finance instructor develops a strong rapport with clients which facilitates open and honest assessment of client family finances. The instructor presents big budget "no-no's;" further, clients learn it is recommended no one spend more than 30% of their gross income on housing. Students also learn that the 30% of gross income standard may not be realistic given their income level and our economy, but are encouraged to keep as close to that number as possible.

For many clients, this is the first time they have created a budget and learned where their money is going. The instructor asks them to write down all the debt they have, including student loans, old utility bills, payday loans, credit cards, and any other debts. This allows the Impact KCK Director to get critical household finance information quickly, following which she has a brief overview discussion with the client. When applicable, the instructor shares contacts with clients for assistance with filing bankruptcy, accessing Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI).

Housing 101. Housing 101 covers knowledge, skills, and etiquette for every stage in the housing process. Clients start by going over what landlords are looking for in prospective tenants and how to fill out an application. The class is continuously adapted to the current rental housing market through landlord feedback gathered by Avenue of Life's Impact KCK Director.

The instructor informs clients they will select their own housing, but the case manager must do a walkthrough of the unit before funding is approved and the client is able to move forward with a rental agreement. The instructor talks about all the things that she looks for during the walkthrough and what clients should be looking for, such as signs of mold, smoke detectors in working order, whether windows are glued shut, and other important issues associated with health and safety within the unit.

Next, the instructor presents information on what **can** be in the lease agreement as compared with what **should** be in the lease agreement. She cautions clients against signing a one-page lease, because such leases generally only benefit the landlord and can be detrimental to the client in the event of a court proceeding.

The course also covers tenant and landlord rights. The instructor emphasizes that all landlords receive her personal phone number and are never afraid to contact her. She is made aware of anything major that happens with the housing unit. She emphasizes that all clients of Impact KCK are a community and how clients treat the landlord and rental property reflects on the Impact KCK Director, the Impact KCK program, and all their fellow homeless families in the school district. Clients respond well to this and feel a sense of pride in treating landlords well. The instructor wraps the class up by explaining the different notices tenants may receive from landlords and what these notices mean.

Employment 101. This class varies based on the group of people in the room. The Impact KCK Employment 101 instructor is a manager with Alliance Workforce and individualizes the classes based on what will most benefit the clients currently served by the course. If everyone is looking for a job, the instructor focuses on resumes. He helps clients determine what should be on their resume and advises them on how their resume should be structured. He also presents information about making resumes look professional and appealing to employers.

The instructor provides his email address to clients and asks them to email their final resumes to him. He then helps them correct mistakes and make other changes. The instructor also covers important workplace behaviors such as showing up on time and taking initiative. He lets clients know what that communicates to employers and other employees and how this relates to promotions. The instructor's primary goal is to get clients into jobs they love and then help them move up the pay scale. Impact KCK strives to get all clients into jobs with livable wages so they can sustain their housing.

Healthcare 101. The main focus of this course is to help clients understand the difference between a visit to a Primary Care Provider (PCP) and a visit to an Emergency Room (ER). The instructor gives clients examples of symptoms to look for in themselves and their children to determine whether they should go to a PCP or the ER. The instructor also explains that when in doubt, seek medical attention.

Further, the class includes information about the benefits of having a PCP. Impact KCK emphasizes the importance of regular medical checkups and dental health. The program has many clients who have never been to a PCP despite being covered by

Medicaid, which would provide this care free of charge.

Common health concerns are also addressed, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and others often present in the community. The Impact KCK program philosophy is that client health is a pillar, an integral part of getting them into stable housing situations. Impact KCK families are encouraged to book appointments to establish themselves with a PCP.

Additional Learning Opportunities. In addition to the four required classes, Impact KCK clients have access to several additional learning opportunities that contribute to self-sufficiency. These classes are offered at different stages of the case management process. Some classes have been optional in the past but will become requirements in the 2018-2019 school year. *Classes required as part of the Impact KCK program in 2018-2019 will include Dave Ramsey Financial Peace and a new food and nutrition class designed and taught by Avenue of Life's Impact KCK Director.*

Trauma-Informed Parenting. Matt Brandmeyer, a Kansas Department for Children and Families-endorsed service provider, offers a six-week class on trauma-informed parenting through Impact KCK and Avenue of Life. Homeless students are exposed to trauma through housing instability and other issues associated with poverty. This class helps parents learn about the special needs of children and youth who have experienced trauma and develop parenting skills sensitive to this trauma. Once parents complete the course, they may participate in a support group. *This course is court-approved for family reunification as well as for open DCF cases.*

Dave Ramsey Financial Peace Training. In addition to Finance 101, each client may take Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace training between months six and eight in

the program. Participation depends on client readiness, class availability, and the case manager's recommendation. If the client is not yet ready for the Dave Ramsey training, this class may be taken in the future. Although this class has been strongly encouraged, it has not been required. Beginning with the 2018-2019 school year, this valuable training will be a requirement for receiving case management services through the Impact KCK program.

Avenue of Life offers the Dave Ramsey course through two Saturday workshops. Clients receive a kit and learn through six DVDs. The Dave Ramsey kit is theirs to keep. Avenue of Life stresses the importance of involving children and youth in this learning experience; they attend class with a parent or guardian. The goal is financial literacy and stewardship on a generational level. Clients receive a gift card upon completion of this training.

A meeting with the case manager is scheduled once the Dave Ramsey training is complete. This meeting takes place in the week following course completion. The case manager and client discuss the client's current situation, financial goals, and what they learned from the Dave Ramsey training. The focus of these meetings is on where the client is at the present time, where the client needs to be, and what is needed to get them there. Clients also expand their knowledge about budgeting and setting financial goals learned in Finance 101. All financial goals are centered on the specific needs and preferences of the individual client. Children and youth are included in these discussions, as appropriate.

Project Strength. Clients have the opportunity to complete Project Strength, a six-week food and nutrition program offered in partnership with Harvesters. This is done in months ten through twelve of the Impact KCK program. Based on Harvester's guidelines, clients who take this course must

attend all six weeks. This course has been highly recommended but optional. *The new Avenue of Life/Impact KCK food and nutrition class will replace Project Strength beginning with the 2018-2019 school year.*

Clients learn about nutrition and cook a meal with the instructor every week. For many, this is their first experience with cooking. Clients receive groceries at the end of each class. They also receive a Harvester's cookbook when they complete the course.

In addition to learning to cook, clients learn how to use their food stamps (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP) to buy healthy foods. They discuss portion size, eating only what they need to eat and not more, and eating leftovers. These practices cut the food budget down. Clients also learn how to use Price Chopper's Double Up Food Bucks program that provides extra fruit and vegetables to families receiving food stamps (<http://www.doubleupheartland.org/>).

The closest Price Chopper for residents of Kansas City, Kansas, is in Roeland Park, making access difficult for some Impact KCK clients. Further, farmers' markets are only available in Kansas City, Kansas, on weekdays, making it difficult for working clients to attend. The River Market in Kansas City, Missouri, has the only farmers' market open on weekends. As a special service, the Impact KCK Director meets with clients at the River Market on Saturdays where she teaches them to shop for healthy foods.

Freezer Meals: Freezer Meals, a one-session course, is also offered to Impact KCK participants. Clients learn how to make healthy, convenient meals which can be frozen for later use. *The Freezer Meals course will be folded into the new Avenue of Life/Impact KCK food and nutrition course that will be offered beginning with the 2018-2019 school year.*

Case Management. At the first meeting with their case manager, clients learn about program expectations, complete all release forms and complete the ACE Health Assessment. The case manager also guides the client through the basics of budgeting and setting financial goals. If the client meets income guidelines, they are offered the option for help with the first month's rent and deposit. Clients may receive this help even if they are placed on the case management waiting list.

After the initial meeting, case managers are required to meet with clients at least once monthly. At the monthly meeting, case managers and clients discuss goals and complete a monthly budget. Goals depend on what the client wants to accomplish, but Avenue of Life stresses housing stability as a first priority. The overall aim of the program is to reduce trauma and focus on the steady and successful progression of children through school so they attain high school graduation.

Impact KCK Graduation. By their 12th month in the program, clients have completed all classes and are stable and ready to **graduate from Impact KCK**. One of Metro Lutheran Ministry's staff members volunteers to provide photographs to make the occasion special. All photos from these one-hour sessions are provided to the family on a flash drive; selected photos are printed. The flash drive and printed photos are for the family to keep.

Impact KCK Services Continue to be Available. Avenue of Life continues to support Impact KCK graduates. Clients know all wrap-around services continue to be available through Avenue of Life. The safety net of services is available until the high school graduation of each family's youngest child. The message to clients is, "We are here for you, and you can always come back when you need help." Clients also have the option of repeating classes. Many come

back to take the finance classes again. The goal is high school graduation for all children and long-term financial and housing stability for the entire family.

IMPACT KCK CASE MANAGEMENT IS DIFFERENT

Navigator Model. In assessing Impact KCK's success, it is important to be clear about its unique case management approach. The intensive, navigator-style case management provided by Impact KCK provides families with a single professional who works with them and advocates for them. Families who are suffering the trauma of homelessness and other issues associated with poverty are not well-equipped to navigate a complex social service network or work with multiple case managers.

A recent report published by the L.P. Cookingham Institute of Urban Affairs at the University of Missouri-Kansas City supports the need for the navigator model of case management. The report is based on focus groups conducted with school homeless liaisons from throughout the Kansas City bi-state region; groups included representatives of urban core, suburban, and semi-rural school districts.

These focus groups were conducted prior to the Cookingham Institute's engagement as a source of expertise for the Impact KCK Assessment; therefore, focus group recommendations are completely separate from the Impact KCK program. School homeless liaisons indicated that families need a navigator who will "take them by the hand" and walk through the social service system with them (Williamson and Guinn, 2017). Interestingly, the Impact KCK program designed and implemented this type of intensive case management two years before the focus group report was published.

How the Impact KCK Waiting List is Different. McKinney-Vento homeless families receive services while on the waiting list, including contact with the Impact KCK Director and other case managers. Further, they are eligible to take Impact KCK classes and benefit from having increased knowledge and skills in what it takes to create and maintain a stable home, get and keep a job, budget for success, make nutritious meals, and take care of all family members' health.



The only difference between those who are being formally served as Impact KCK families and those who are on the waiting list is that waiting list families do not have an assigned navigator. Instead, they are served by the Impact KCK Director and other case managers associated with the program.

Thus, the Impact KCK waiting list experience is much more like **actual case management** as conducted by other service providers or programs than it is like being on a waiting list.

PROGRAM RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

FAMILIES SERVED

Impact KCK served 1,002 families during the three school years since implementation began in August 2015. Of these, 306 families were permanently housed and 276 were employed. Table 2 provides data on individual school years 2015-2016 through 2017-2018. Data presented in this table include results for the full 2017-2018 school year.

Table 2: Impact KCK Results, 2015-2018

	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	TOTAL
Families Reached	207	394	401	1,002
Families Housed	58	116	132	306
Families Employed	46	87	143	276

Source: Avenue of Life

The families reached figure includes all families served by Impact KCK. Families housed includes all who have been provided a permanent housing solution. Finally, the families employed number refers to the number of households in which one or both parents or guardians have become employed through Impact KCK.

REDUCTION IN STUDENT HOMELESSNESS

Overall, Impact KCK has produced a dramatic reduction in the number of KCKPS students experiencing homelessness. Table 3 presents results through January 2018.

Table 3: KCKPS Number of Homeless Students, May 2015-January 2018

	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018 ⁵
Homeless Students, K-12	1,151	855	640	594

Source: Kansas City Kansas Public Schools

Student homelessness fell from 1,151 at the close of the 2014-2015 school year to 594 at the end of the first semester of 2017-2018 (January 2018). This is a decline of nearly 50% (48.4%) in 2.5 school years for kindergarten through grade 12.⁶

PERMANENT HOUSING SOLUTIONS

One of the things that differentiates Impact KCK from other well-intentioned collaborative efforts to address student homelessness is that it **includes a permanent housing solution**. Impact KCK families get initial security through temporary housing solutions arranged with help from their case manager and take classes to prepare themselves for a successful launch into housing stability.

Once an Impact KCK family is ready for permanent housing, their case manager will help them identify and secure a suitable rental housing unit. A suitable rental housing unit is one that is clean, is without any safety issues associated with the unit's construction or maintenance, and is affordable to the family based on their income.

Families ready for permanent housing are provided with the security deposit and the first month's rent. Further, the unit is equipped with all that is necessary for daily living, including not only furniture, but also pots and pans, utensils, and dishes. Thus, there is no need for the family to spend money on setting up their home. This saving

is an immediate contribution to the family's ability to remain stably housed, as they will not need to spend for household items or furniture.

MOST IMPACT KCK FAMILIES REMAIN HOUSED

Impact KCK has achieved a **95% retention rate** through its permanent housing solutions. This achievement is made possible by the nature of case management and other services provided to Impact KCK client families. The required education component of Impact KCK also contributes to this success.

Impact KCK's intensive case management system means that client families who begin to experience a new challenge—or increased difficulties addressing an ongoing challenge—that threatens their housing stability can go back and get assistance to help them remain housed. Sometimes this is as simple as providing families with additional instruction on keeping their home clean and well maintained. Other times it means helping a parent or guardian who has lost a job to get and keep a new one. Whatever barriers to housing stability arise, Impact KCK families know they can get assistance from their case manager to remain housed or regain housing if it has been lost.

Impact KCK families have learned through their required classes about how to budget, how to be a good tenant, how to properly clean their unit, and the basics of leasing and being a good neighbor. The education these families receive is also a factor in the Impact KCK program's 95% stable housing retention rate.

⁵ Results for the 2017-2018 school year are through the first semester only (January 2018).

⁶ KCKPS numbers for homeless pre-K students are not available for all of the

school years reported here. Many homeless pre-K students are part of the same households as older siblings; therefore, their homeless numbers have been reduced simultaneously with the K-12 numbers. In total, the number of homeless students was reduced by more than 50% when pre-K students are considered.

IMPACT KCK AND REDUCTIONS IN FOSTER CARE NUMBERS

By housing homeless students and their families, Impact KCK reduces the number of children and youth who enter the foster care system. This arises from the fact that some children and youth are removed from their families due to a lack of stable housing. In cases where children or minor youth have already been taken into foster care due to a lack of stable housing and/or other issues associated with poverty, family reunification becomes possible through the interventions offered by Impact KCK. In cases where the parent or guardian is in danger of losing children to the foster care system due to lack of stable housing or associated issues, the assistance received through Impact KCK makes it possible for families to remain together.

Impact KCK's effect on the Kansas foster care system is two-fold: First, it reduces the pressure on the already overburdened foster care system itself. Second—and most importantly—it reduces the trauma associated with poverty and homelessness by either keeping children and minor youth with the parent or reunifying the family if children or minor youth have been taken into the foster care system.

FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENT HOMELESSNESS NUMBERS

Several factors should be considered when interpreting the homeless student data presented in this assessment. Some of these factors are associated with KCKPS data collection, while others are external to both KCKPS and Impact KCK. It is important to understand both internal and external factors affecting the data presented in this assessment; readers should be aware that there are **critical factors outside the control** of either KCKPS or Impact KCK.

Infant and Pre-School Data. Data presented in Table 3 are for kindergarten through grade 12 and do not include data for infants and pre-school children. The original KCKPS 1400 Diplomas estimates made in 2015 included the number of homeless infants, children, and youth (1,151 K-12 students and 249 infants and pre-school children). Unfortunately, data for homeless infants and pre-school children were omitted from KCKPS calculations for the 2015-2016 school year. Thus, the data reported in this assessment are for K-12 only to ensure comparability across time.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison Transition. The KCKPS McKinney-Vento liaison position was vacant from July to October 2017. This created some inconsistency in designating students as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act, since staff responsible for distributing food and clothing to needy students and families mistakenly classified all students receiving such assistance as McKinney-Vento students. Some of these students and their families were already housed (thus not qualified as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act) and only required temporary assistance with food and clothing. Others were homeless and went on to obtain assistance through Impact KCK.

At the time of this assessment, KCKPS had corrected McKinney-Vento student counts through January 2018. Because an accurate count was not yet available for the entire 2017-2018 school year at the time this report was prepared, this assessment is based on confirmed homeless data as of January 2018.

Transfers into KCKPS. Homeless students and their families are transferring from other school systems within the Kansas City region to KCKPS in order to take advantage of the permanent housing solutions offered by Impact KCK. This is a significant issue affecting program implementation over

which the school district, Avenue of Life, and program partners have no control.

Hurricane Season 2017. KCKPS drew many families who had evacuated their homes in Houston and Puerto Rico due to Hurricanes Harvey and Maria in 2017. As with the transfer of homeless students from within in the Kansas City region, the arrival of newly homeless families who escaped natural disasters was beyond the control of the school district and Impact KCK organizations.

Impact of Homeless Transfers and Hurricane-Displaced Families. Homeless students transferring into KCKPS and the influx of hurricane-displaced families increased the number of homeless families qualifying for Impact KCK under McKinney-Vento guidelines. Thus, it is important to keep this in mind when interpreting Impact KCK results. Impact KCK's reductions in student homelessness year-over-year from August 2015 to January 2018 were achieved while the school district experienced an *in-migration of students qualified as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act*. This means that not only did Impact KCK end homelessness for a large number of **existing** KCKPS students, but also for many **new** KCKPS students who entered the school district in a state of homelessness.

Declining Housing Affordability. Compounding the challenges facing Impact KCK as it works to substantially reduce student homelessness in KCKPS is the fact that housing affordability is rapidly declining in much of the Kansas City Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The rise of home sale prices and rents across the bi-state region translate into a lack of sufficient housing opportunities low-income households can afford.

This is particularly true for households at or below 50% of area median income as determined each year by the U.S.

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The HUD-adjusted area median income for the Kansas City MSA in 2018 is \$80,000 for a family of four. Thus, a household of four at or below 50% of area median income would have an income of \$40,000 or less. Given that poverty in Wyandotte County reached a high of nearly 24% in recent years, many households have incomes well below even 50% of the area median.

Further, many families experiencing or at risk of homelessness have incomes well below the poverty level. In 2018, poverty for a family of four is an annual income at or below \$25,100 based on Department of Health & Human Services guidelines. Census thresholds for poverty in a four-person household range from \$24,858 to \$25,696, depending on how many children under age 18 are part of the four-person household. Functionally, poverty for a family of four in 2018 is an income at or below \$25,000 per year.⁷

Federal guidelines indicate that a household can afford no more than 30% of their gross monthly income—that is, income before any deductions for taxes—for housing costs, including utilities. Spending more than 30% of gross income on housing places the household in jeopardy of having too little money left over for essentials such as food, health care, transportation, education, and clothing. Low-income households often spend more than 50% of their gross income on housing, placing them in severe jeopardy of being without basics required for daily living, and often, homelessness.

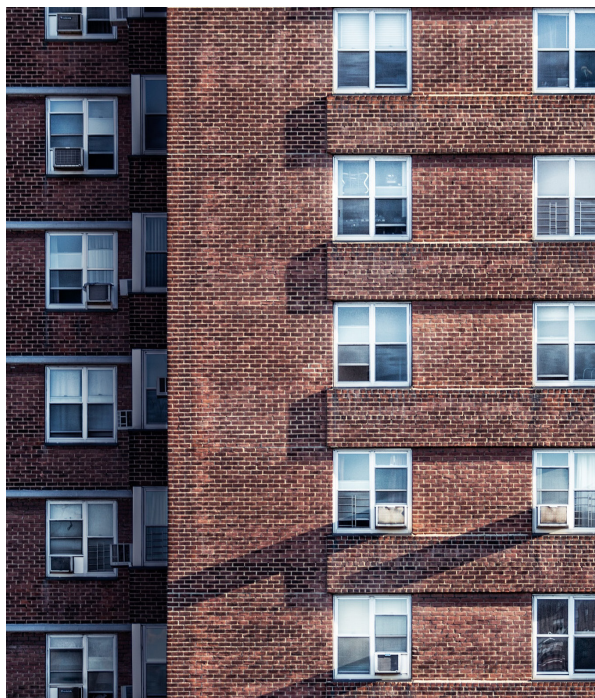
For renters, housing costs include rent and utilities, where utilities include electric, gas, water, sewer, and trash pickup but not telephone service. A family of four with an income of \$25,000 per year would thus need a rental unit that would cost them no more

⁷ The federal government uses slightly different estimation techniques for poverty, depending on whether the purpose is for program qualification (poverty guidelines) or statistical purposes (poverty thresholds). Poverty guidelines are produced by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, while poverty thresholds are calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau.

than \$625 per month, including utilities, to be considered affordably housed. Clearly, there are very few units available in any part of the Kansas City MSA in this price range.

A family of four headed by a single parent earning minimum wage (\$7.25) is well below poverty. With full-time work at \$7.25 per hour, the parent would earn \$15,080 per year. Affordability for this family would mean a unit with a total cost for rent and utilities of no more than \$377 per month. This translates into a substantial risk of homelessness among minimum-wage earning families with a single wage earner. Even families with two adults earning minimum wage in full-time jobs will have difficulty finding a unit they can afford, since that would translate into the need of a rental at no more than \$756, including utilities.

Overall, the lack of a sufficient supply of housing affordable to lower-income working households puts families at risk of homelessness. Thus, the trend toward increasing levels of unaffordability makes it more challenging to end homelessness among KCKPS students and their families.



WHY IS IMPACT KCK A SUCCESS?

Multiple factors explain Impact KCK’s success. The **single most critical factor** explaining the program’s success is the **skilled and disciplined application of the collective impact model** for community change. A number of other factors also contribute to the program’s success; major factors are presented and discussed in this section.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT IS MORE THAN COLLABORATION

The collective impact model for community change is based on more than 50 years’ experience in addressing complex social problems. The War on Poverty in the 1960s began with many good intentions and involved communities across the U.S. engaging in never-before-attempted efforts to address poverty, lack of housing and food security, and racial inequality. However, it took decades for national, state, and local leaders, community professionals, and members of the public to understand what it takes to make effective action happen at the community level and beyond.

By the 1990s, scholars and practitioners had begun to describe work undertaken across multiple organizations—and often multiple sectors—as *policy networks or collaborative governance*. In evaluating community mental health networks, for instance, Milward and Provan (1995) found that the most effective networks had a strong central organization that helped ensure the success of the group of collaborating organizations. Collective impact incorporates this knowledge and other findings as the foundation for a “next generation” approach to working in policy networks or collaborative governance structures.

With the collective impact emphasis on the presence of a backbone organization, shared vision, shared measurement, and continuous communication, the model represents a **very specific method** for engaging in collaboration. Impact KCK's backbone and partner organizations make skillful use of the collective impact model. This must be distinguished from other types of collaboration that may not bring to bear the intense focus and strategic approach found in collective impact.

ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE POLICY PROBLEM

Effective policy action must be based on an accurate understanding of the problem being addressed. Impact KCK backbone and partner organizations gained an accurate understanding of the causes of student homelessness in their community through analyzing objective evidence (data) and sharing knowledge about the causes of student and family homelessness gained through experience in serving low-income families.

One of the particular strengths of the Impact KCK program is that it includes a multi-sector, multi-disciplinary approach to both understanding the policy problem and addressing it. The fact that professionals representing many different organizations and possessing various types of expertise contributed to an accurate understanding of how students and their families become homeless made it possible to design effective interventions.

SINGLE POINT OF SERVICE

Students and families who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness experience intense stress. Further, these families often have limited access to transportation. Making entry into the Impact KCK program a "one-stop" experience contributes greatly to the program's success.

Rather than sending already stressed students and families to multiple service-provider locations, Impact KCK makes it possible for them to be served in one safe, convenient location. Many families faced with the need to go to multiple service-provider locations and tell their story over and over again will simply decide not to seek help or stop before they obtain all services required to attain housing stability and self-sufficiency. Further, just the process of telling their stories multiple times increases the trauma associated with homelessness. Thus, the single point of service employed by Impact KCK not only makes it more convenient for homeless students and families to be served, it also increases the likelihood that they will get a complete solution leading to housing stability and self-sufficiency and decreases the trauma associated with homelessness.

INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT AND SYSTEM NAVIGATION

Each Impact KCK family is assigned a case manager who works to coordinate services with multiple providers and is the frontline source of support on an ongoing basis. Case managers get to know the students and families they serve very well; through this process, they understand how best to help their clients navigate the complex process of moving from homelessness to stability and self-sufficiency. Case managers walk every step of the way with Impact KCK families and remain a source of help and support once families have completed the program as the need may arise. Case managers remain available until the family's youngest child graduates high school.

The intensive case management model adopted by Impact KCK is consistent with findings reported by Williamson and Guinn (2017) based on focus group sessions conducted with school homeless liaisons and counselors in late 2016. Focus group participants reported that homeless families

need someone who will serve as a navigator for the array of services required to address their needs. While this finding was reported well after the launch of Impact KCK, it is clear that those who designed the intensive case management system employed by the program are in accord with the views of liaisons and counselors representing school districts throughout the Kansas City region. This reinforces the finding that the intensive case management/navigator model employed by Impact KCK is a key factor in the program's success.

PERMANENT HOUSING SOLUTIONS

Permanent housing solutions are an integral part of Impact KCK. The inclusion of permanent housing solutions as a formal, coordinated part of the program distinguishes Impact KCK from other collaborative efforts to address the needs of homeless students and families. *The crucial role of the permanent housing solution must be understood as a primary factor in Impact KCK's success.* Without the permanent housing solutions offered by Impact KCK, the dramatic reduction in the number of homeless KCKPS students would not have been possible.

COMMITMENT TO GO THE DISTANCE TO SUPPORT FAMILY SUCCESS

Some homeless families require more assistance than others in achieving housing stability. For families requiring a longer and more complex adjustment period before permanent housing status is achieved, the backbone and partner organizations must be willing to "go the distance" and continue to work for solutions despite possible setbacks.

For instance, if an Impact KCK parent did not experience housing stability while growing up, they may find it difficult to adapt to such stability once the opportunity becomes reality. In this situation, the family may need assistance in transitioning to a new housing

opportunity due to a failure to maintain their original placement. By continuing to work with the family on issues affecting their ability to maintain permanent housing, Impact KCK prevents students from re-experiencing homelessness and its associated trauma, while also building the parents' skills to the level necessary for maintaining housing stability.

CASE MANAGEMENT AND OTHER SERVICES REMAIN AVAILABLE

Case management and other services remain available to formerly homeless students and families through the high school graduation of the family's youngest child. This is an important factor in explaining why formerly homeless students and families remain housed. If a circumstance arises that would threaten the housing stability, food security, employment, education, or health of an Impact KCK family, they may return to Avenue of Life to receive services that will help them remain stable and housed.

BACKBONE ORGANIZATION CAPACITY AND COMMITMENT

The collective impact backbone organization must have both capacity and commitment. Capacity is more than simply the number of personnel. It encompasses all resources required to effectively coordinate the collective impact effort, including the following:

- Management and staff with skills required to facilitate success
- The ability to attract funding
- The ability to conduct shared measurement activities
- The ability to build and maintain relationships among partners and with the community at large
- The ability to advance public policy (Turner, et al. 2012).

Avenue of Life, Impact KCK's backbone organization, serves as not only a source of expertise and centralized coordination, it is also a source of trust capital. In order to bring partners together to work in collaboration rather than competition, the backbone organization must be an entity that has earned the trust of community organizations and the public. Avenue of Life fulfills this role, and over time the trust capital among Impact KCK partners has grown through shared experiences and shared commitment to addressing homelessness among KCKPS students and their families.

Moreover, Avenue of Life's leadership and staff show strong commitment to continuing Impact KCK's work over time. This commitment is an important ingredient in recruiting and maintaining community partners. It also creates a much-needed foundation for the success of those served by Impact KCK. By working with commitment, Avenue of Life communicates to those served that Impact KCK will be available as a source of stability throughout their journey to housing stability and self-sufficiency.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS' COMMITMENT

Impact KCK's success would not be possible without the commitment of a core set of partner organizations. For instance, the Kansas Department for Children and Families has been represented at every Impact KCK Wednesday session since implementation began in 2015. Alliance Workforce has also been a constant presence, as has Economic Opportunity Foundation, Inc. and others. The commitment of the core set of partner organizations makes it possible for Impact KCK to overcome the occasional loss of a partner. Further, the partner organizations that maintain their Impact KCK commitment serve as an example to new partners and the community at large.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

The story of Impact KCK is a story that began with community leaders coming together to address student homelessness as a critical policy issue facing KCKPS and the Unified Government of Kansas City/Wyandotte County, Kansas. Launching a successful collective impact initiative required buy-in from leaders such as former Mayor Mark Holland and now-retired KCKPS superintendent Dr. Cynthia Lane. The public acknowledgement that student homelessness was a policy issue requiring community action provided by Mayor Holland, Dr. Lane, and other leaders facilitated the collective policy response represented by Impact KCK. Important to Impact KCK's continued success is the support of Mayor David Alvey.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REPLICATION

Avenue of Life and the Kansas City Kansas Public Schools receive calls each week from communities within the region and across the country requesting information on how they can replicate Impact KCK. This section provides recommendations for replication based on three years' experience with this program.

PURPOSEFUL USE OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

It is critical to understand that Impact KCK's success is generated by a skilled, purposeful application of the collective impact model for community change. As a collective impact initiative, Impact KCK is much more than a collaboration among community partners. Instead, it is a program led by a backbone organization with the capacity and willingness to fulfill the backbone organization's role in coordinating efforts, seeking funding, providing shared measurement, and often facilitating solutions "on the fly" as situations arise. Without a strong backbone organization, collaboration can be fraught with tensions arising from competition, lack of focus, and unfulfilled promise.

BACKBONE ORGANIZATION SELECTION

Given the importance of the backbone organization in the performance of a collective impact initiative, its selection requires careful consideration. This consideration should include conversations with community members about which organizations get things done as compared with which organizations may be most visible. *Sometimes the best choice for backbone organization is highly visible in their community, but often it is not.* Further,

backbone selection activities should include consideration of the organization's trust capital within the community, as well as its technical and financial capacity to effectively carry out the role of backbone in a collective impact effort.

RECRUITING PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Recruiting partner organizations should be based on identified need for services. The Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix provides numerous domains across which families in need may require services; identifying potential community partners through this lens is recommended. This approach will help ensure the collective impact initiative includes all elements likely to be necessary for homeless students and families to be successful in reaching housing stability and self-sufficiency.

Further, prospective partners should be examined from the standpoint of their willingness to work with others and share credit for program success. Given that many community organizations must regularly compete for resources, operating within the collective impact framework may represent a dramatic change in perspective and operations. Partner organizations' commitment to transforming the lives of homeless students and their families and willingness to work with the coordination of the backbone organization will be important factors in determining program outcomes.

The use of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the backbone organization and each partner organization is recommended. The MOU may contain information on the time period the MOU will cover as well as guidelines for the conduct of partner organization activities within the collective impact program.

INCLUDE PERMANENT HOUSING SOLUTIONS

Impact KCK's success would not have been possible without a permanent housing solution provided as a formal part of the program. Efforts to address the needs of homeless students without providing a permanent housing solution fall short of the goal of ensuring students' housing stability—and that stability is crucial to students' ability to study and succeed through high school graduation and beyond.

SINGLE POINT OF SERVICE

A single point of service such as that offered each week in the Impact KCK program facilitates program success by making it easier for homeless students and families to access all services required to become stable and self-sufficient. Homeless students and families experience significant trauma from the lack of stable housing; sending them to various locations around town or the region to access services not only adds to stress and trauma, but is also unlikely to result in the student or family accessing the full array of services required to achieve housing stability, family self-sufficiency, and ultimately, high school graduation for each child.

INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

Homeless students and families need a navigator who can guide them every step of the way through access to services and a permanent housing solution. The use of intensive case management where the student and family have a single person who coordinates their access to services and housing and acts as advocate when necessary increases the likelihood of success. This method is used by Impact KCK. Further, the navigator model of case management is recommended by school homeless liaisons throughout the Kansas City metropolitan region (Williamson and Guinn 2017).

CONTINUING ACCESS TO SERVICES

One of the key factors in Impact KCK's success is that formerly homeless students and families have continuing access to services through the high school graduation of the youngest child in the family. This prevents them from falling back into homelessness if circumstances occur that threaten their housing stability. Thus, a successful replication effort would include not only intensive case management during the length of the formal program, but also ready access to continuing services beyond program completion as needed.

CONCLUSION

Impact KCK has earned a well-deserved reputation for success in ending student homelessness. With a reduction in student homelessness of nearly 50% in just 2.5 school years, the program serves as an example of what can be accomplished with a concerted community effort.

Impact KCK's success is predicated on the strategic and disciplined use of the collective impact model for community change. Avenue of Life, the program's backbone organization, plays a key role in producing the results presented in this assessment.

Those wishing to replicate Impact KCK and its success must become expert in the application of the collective impact model. Further, it is critical to make permanent housing solutions and intensive, navigator-style case management central features of efforts to end student homelessness in communities throughout the country.

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AVENUE OF LIFE IMPACT KCK LEADERSHIP TEAM

Impact KCK's lead organization is Avenue of Life, a faith-based nonprofit committed to helping people and families overcome poverty and become self-sufficient. Leadership for the Impact KCK program is provided by Avenue of Life's CEO/Executive Director and Impact KCK Director.

Desiree Monize

CEO/Executive Director
Avenue of Life

Desiree Monize is the founder and Executive Director of Avenue of Life and has more than 18 years' experience in cross-sector management consulting, with 15 years' experience in nonprofit management. She is a visionary leader with a talent for rebuilding inefficient businesses with the effective leadership and strategies needed for healthy growth and expansion. She is passionately committed to urban ministry and community development. As CEO of a nonprofit with the aim of breaking the cycle of poverty through community development in Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri, Desiree leads the Impact KCK collaborative in Kansas City, Kansas. Desiree is also Principal for Vital Impact Consulting, a nonprofit and management consulting firm.

Alexis Stankovich, MSW

Impact KCK Director
Avenue of Life

Alexis Stankovich is the Impact KCK Director at Avenue of Life in Kansas City, Kansas. Working directly with the Kansas City Kansas Public Schools' McKinney-Vento Liaison and a network of more than 30 partner organizations, Alexis oversees case management for homeless families and youth in the district. In the third academic year since Impact KCK's launch, Alexis coordinated collaborative case management which reached 401 families, housed 132 families, and employed 143 individuals. Alexis has a Master's in Social Work (MSW) from University of Missouri-Kansas City, lives in Wyandotte County, and is passionate about ending homelessness in her community.



L.P. COOKINGHAM INSTITUTE OF URBAN AFFAIRS

The L.P. Cookingham Institute of Urban Affairs was established in 2006 as a community-engaged research unit of the Department of Public Affairs in the Henry W. Bloch School of Management at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Re-launched under the leadership of Dr. Anne Williamson, Victor and Caroline Schutte/Missouri Professor of Urban Affairs in 2015, the Cookingham Institute has emerged as a source of action-based research and technical assistance on topics including housing policy, community development, and other issues facing communities throughout the Kansas City region and the nation.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Cookingham Institute’s mission is to advance scholarship and practice in urban policy and management through education, research, and service. Our work is based on our commitment to public service broadly defined and inclusive of multiple disciplines and stakeholders. In keeping with this commitment, we seek to provide a national example of excellence in urban scholarship and university-based community engagement.

ASSESSMENT PROJECT TEAM

Dr. Anne R. Williamson
Victor and Caroline Schutte/Missouri Professor of Urban Affairs
Director, L.P. Cookingham Institute of Urban Affairs

Dr. Williamson brings a blend of public and private sector leadership experience to her role as urban affairs faculty at UMKC. An expert in housing policy, community development, citizen participation, and public budgeting, she seeks to bridge

scholarship and practice in her teaching, research, and service. With more than 20 years' experience leading university community-engaged research projects, Dr. Williamson has authored more than 30 journal articles, monographs, and reports on urban issues. Her expertise in housing policy has been recognized in United States District Court (Southern District of Florida), and she is actively engaged in helping communities overcome barriers to housing affordability and address other critical urban policy issues.

Damon Guinn, EMPA

Fellow, L.P. Cookingham Institute of Urban Affairs

Damon Guinn is Director of Engagement for the Hmong American Partnership in Minneapolis, Minnesota. A Fellow of the Cookingham Institute, he served as the Cookingham Institute's Assistant Director from 2016 to 2018. Damon's background includes extensive experience in child, youth, and community development at the local, national, and international levels. Further, he has served as writer and managing editor for an international humanitarian organization and as a grant writer and communications strategist for a Kansas City-based social services agency.

Karen Neal, MPA

Project Manager
L.P. Cookingham Institute of Urban Affairs

Karen Neal brings expertise in nonprofit leadership and community issues to her work with the Cookingham Institute. A graduate of the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program in the Henry W. Bloch School of Management at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, Karen's background includes extensive experience in legal administration and as a nonprofit operations executive for an organization with international reach. In addition to her research related to child and youth homelessness, housing affordability

and collective impact, Karen provides operational and project management recommendations and has managed the Institute's community engagement events.

Alexander Fitzgerald

Lead Research Associate
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Alex is a student in the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program in the Henry W. Bloch School of Management at the University of Missouri-Kansas City with plans to graduate in May 2019. Alex brings professional experience with AmeriCorps, Santa Fe Habitat for Humanity, and Truman Heritage Habitat for Humanity (Independence, Missouri) to his work at the Cookingham Institute. He performs research on critical urban policy issues, including child and youth homelessness, housing affordability, and citizen participation.

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Annelissa is an August 2018 graduate of the Henry W. Bloch School of Management's Master of Public Administration (MPA) at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Annelissa's research at the Cookingham Institute includes child and youth homelessness, Children's Service Fund implementation, housing affordability, and citizen participation. Her interests also include urban education and voter engagement.



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