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IMPACT KCK ASSESSMENT 2019-2020:

A FIVE-YEAR MILESTONE IN SERVING
HOMELESS STUDENTS AND FAMILIES



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2019-2020 school year was Impact KCK's fifth year serving Wyandotte County's homeless students and families. Impact KCK now serves all students and families in each school district in the county. The program began with referrals from the Kansas City Kansas Public Schools in August 2015; referrals from the Turner Unified School District began in August 2019. Piper, Edwardsville, and Bonner Springs school districts began referrals when the COVID-19 pandemic was identified in early 2020.

Regular assessments support effective program management and innovation. Avenue of Life, the Impact KCK backbone organization, engages in developmental evaluation practices, and these practices support the analysis provided in annual assessments.¹ Developmental evaluation practices also result in "real time" feedback on program issues and progress, which supports ongoing innovation in serving homeless students and their families.

This Assessment was prepared by Dr. Anne R. Williamson of Community Analytics, LLC. Dr. Williamson has more than 35 years' experience in research, evaluation, and assessment of organizations and collaborative networks. Dr. Williamson has been recognized in U.S. District Court as an expert in housing policy and has also conducted community development work through university research centers for more than 25 years. She is the author of *Impact KCK Assessment: Reducing Student Homelessness through Collective Impact*²

and *Impact KCK Assessment 2018-2019: Continuing to Serve Homeless Students and Families*³ and more than 30 other publications.

Impact KCK is Collective Impact in Action

Impact KCK is based on the Collective Impact Model for Community Change, as well as several key social service innovations facilitated by Collective Impact. The model was introduced by John Kania and Mark Kramer in 2011⁴ and has been used to create effective collaborative solutions for communities around the world. Some of the many examples of issues addressed through Collective Impact are the clean-up of polluted rivers, reduction in neighborhood crime, helping public housing residents secure jobs, and addressing homelessness.⁵

Impact KCK was designed by the Kansas Community Leadership Enterprise (KCLE) group convened by the Kansas Department for Children and Families in 2014. In early 2015, the group determined it would work to address homelessness in the Kansas City Public Schools through the strategic, disciplined approach to collaboration offered by the Collective Impact Model. The successful application of the model facilitated innovation in the delivery of an array of social services critical to helping families move from homelessness to housing stability and self-sufficiency.

1 Developmental evaluation is sometimes referred to as design-based implementation research.

2 Williamson, Anne R. *Impact KCK Assessment: Reducing Student Homelessness through Collective Impact*. L.P. Cookingham Institute of Urban Affairs, Henry W. Bloch School of Management, University of Missouri-Kansas City. October 2018 Available for download at: <https://www.avenueoflife.org/impact-kck.html>.

3 Williamson, Anne R. *Impact KCK Assessment 2018-2019: Continuing to Serve Homeless Students and Families*. L.P. Cookingham Institute of Urban Affairs, Henry W. Bloch School of Management, University of Missouri-Kansas City. May 2020. Available for download at: <https://www.avenueoflife.org/impact-kck.html>.

4 Kania, John and Mark Kramer. "Collective Impact." *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 9, no. 1 (2011): 36-41.

5 Hanleybrown, Fay, John Kania, and Mark Kramer. "Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work." *Stanford Social Science Innovation Review* (website), January 26, 2012.

Effective Collective Impact programs require a backbone organization. Avenue of Life is the backbone for Impact KCK. In that role, it coordinates the action of more than 52 partners and employs staff dedicated to the Impact KCK program. Staff include Impact KCK Navigators who provide intensive case management to homeless students and families.

Measuring Program Effectiveness

The key indicator of Impact KCK's success is the **95% rate of housing stability**⁶ among families who receive a permanent housing solution. Other indicators for the period August 2015-June 2020 include:

- Families Reached: 1,446
- Families Housed: 448
- Families Employed: 347

Further, Impact KCK reduced student homelessness in KCKPS by more than 50% in less than three years (August 2015-January 2018).

During the 2019-2020 school year, Impact KCK was responsible for the following results:

- Families Reached: 185
- Families Housed: 76
- Families Employed: 40
- Homeless Prevention Families: 62

In addition to services to homeless families with students in Wyandotte County school districts, Impact KCK provided a Youth Services Coordinator on site at Wyandotte High School (Kansas City Kansas Public Schools) in 2019-2020. Impact KCK provided

services and produced the results shown below:

- Actively case-managed youth as of May 2020: 38
- Case-managed seniors: 13
- Case-managed seniors graduation rate: 100%

New Capacity for Serving Spanish-Speaking Families

Avenue of Life and Impact KCK have served Wyandotte County's Spanish-speaking residents—including undocumented residents—since their formation. However, the tragic shooting deaths in a community bar in Kansas City, Kansas, in October 2019 made it clear that more was needed. Avenue of Life moved quickly to help the community heal. Avenue of Life covered the cost of funerals for several of the shooting victims and engaged the services of the nonprofit Avance Community Center to increase Avenue's capacity to serve Wyandotte's Spanish-speaking residents. In addition, Avenue of Life hired the CEO of Avance Community Center to be a full-time, Spanish-speaking Navigator for Impact KCK families.

Avenue of Life and Impact KCK have increased the array of services available to Spanish-speaking residents, including undocumented residents, through its partnership with Avance Community Center.

6 Pre-COVID 19 https://ssir.org/articles/entry/channeling_change_making_collective_impact_work#. Accessed March 30, 2021.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic began to affect Wyandotte County schools in March 2020. Because the Impact KCK program was well-established with an effective system of collaboration for serving children, youth, and families in need at the time the pandemic came to the Kansas City, the program was able to quickly adapt to the new environment of community service. Further, Avenue of Life and its partners in Impact KCK had already served hundreds of families in Wyandotte County beyond those who are part of the Impact KCK program. This made it possible for Avenue of Life and Impact KCK to rapidly adapt to community needs once the pandemic began.



Celebrating a Five-Year Milestone

This *Impact KCK Assessment 2019-2020* marks a very important milestone for Impact KCK and Wyandotte County, Kansas. The 2019-2020 school year was the fifth year in which this innovative

and effective program served homeless students and families. This has resulted in permanent housing solutions for 448 families from the 2015-2016 through 2019-2020 school years.

Impact KCK and the Future

Impact KCK's design is intentional in its flexibility and spirit of continuous improvement to most effectively meet current and future community needs. That means working to serve the community today while also keeping an eye toward the future. Avenue of Life and the Impact KCK partner organizations have continued to innovate in 2020, including the opening of the Avenue Youth House for unaccompanied homeless youth and the expansion of capacity to serve Spanish-speaking members of the community in the 2019-2020 school year.

Impact KCK has shown that it has staying power and the capacity to adapt to changes in community needs. The devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that Avenue of Life and Impact KCK partner organizations are able to adapt and continue to serve even under the most severely challenging circumstances.

Impact KCK will continue to be a part of breaking the cycle of poverty in Wyandotte County now and in the future. Clearly, the additional capacity to serve developed in response to the pandemic will foster new innovations in addressing homelessness among children, youth, and families.

INTRODUCTION

The 2019-2020 school year was Impact KCK's fifth year serving homeless students and families in Wyandotte County. Impact KCK began serving these students and families in the Kansas City Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) in August 2015. Referrals from the Turner Unified School District (TUSD) began in August 2019. Piper, Edwardsville, and Bonner Springs school districts began referrals in early 2020 in response to the pandemic.

About this Report

This Assessment was prepared by Dr. Anne R. Williamson of Community Analytics, LLC. Dr. Williamson has more than 35 years' experience in research, evaluation, and assessment of organizations and collaborative networks. Dr. Williamson has been recognized in U.S. District Court as an expert in housing policy and has also conducted housing and community development work through university research centers for more than 25 years. She is the author of *Impact KCK Assessment: Reducing Student Homelessness through Collective Impact*⁷ and *Impact KCK Assessment 2018-2019: Continuing to Serve Homeless Students and Families*⁸ and more than 30 other publications.

This 2019-2020 *Assessment* provides information critical to the support of continuous innovation in serving

homeless students and families. Further, it provides funders and other community stakeholders with key information about program successes, challenges, and other issues.

Student Homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Act

Homeless Student Definition

The McKinney-Vento Act⁹ defines homeless students in kindergarten through grade 12 as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1))" and who meet the following guidelines:

(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;

(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings [within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C)];

7 Williamson, Anne R. *Impact KCK Assessment: Reducing Student Homelessness through Collective Impact*. L.P. Cookingham Institute of Urban Affairs, Henry W. Bloch School of Management, University of Missouri-Kansas City. October 2018. Available for download at: <https://www.avenueoflife.org/impact-kck.html>.

8 Williamson, Anne R. *Impact KCK Assessment 2018-2019: Continuing to Serve Homeless Students and Families*. L.P. Cookingham Institute of Urban Affairs, Henry W. Bloch School of Management, University of Missouri-Kansas City. May 2020. Available for download at: <https://www.avenueoflife.org/impact-kck.html>.

9 As amended over time since its introduction by Congress as the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act in 1987

(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

(iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purpose of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii) (Public Law No. 107-110).¹⁰

The McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness expands on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness by including children and youth who are sharing housing with others (“doubled up” or “couch surfing”). Thus, the McKinney-Vento homeless definition includes students who are experiencing housing instability as well as those who are literally without shelter.

School District Responsibilities

The McKinney-Vento Act requires every school district and local educational agency (LEA) in the United States to appoint a local homeless liaison. The liaison must identify homeless children and youth and ensure that those students are both enrolled in school and have the same opportunities to succeed as their non-homeless peers.¹¹¹²

The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) describes the liaison’s responsibilities as ensuring that:

- Homeless families, children, and youth receive educational services for which they are eligible. . .and referrals to health care, dental, mental health, and appropriate services;
- The parents or guardians of homeless children and youth are informed of educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youth is disseminated where they receive services, such as schools, family shelters, and soup kitchens;
- Enrollment disputes are mediated according to the McKinney-Vento Act; and
- The parents and guardians of homeless children and youth, and all unaccompanied homeless youth, are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin.¹³

In addition, liaisons must:

Obtain immunization and medical records on behalf of students;
Work with school staff to make sure that homeless children and youth are immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of disputes that might arise

10 McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvement Act, Section 725, as reauthorized under Title X, Part C of the No Child Left Behind Act (H.R. 1), 2001.

11 Williamson, Anne and Damon Guinn. *Serving Homeless Students in the Kansas City Region: Barriers and Best Practices*. L.P. Cookingham Institute of Urban Affairs, Henry W. Bloch School of Management, University of Missouri-Kansas City, November 2017.

12 National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE). *Local Homeless Liaisons for School Districts: Making the Right Selection and Supporting their Effectiveness*. Best Practices in Homeless Education Brief Series. February 2015.

13 National Center for Homeless Education, *ibid*.

over school enrollment or placement; and Collaborate and coordinate with the State Homeless Coordinator and with community and school personnel responsible for providing education and related support services to homeless children and, youth.¹⁴

Much of a homeless liaison's time is spent identifying homeless children and youth. They also spend time connecting homeless students and their families with services and coordinating transportation services.¹⁵

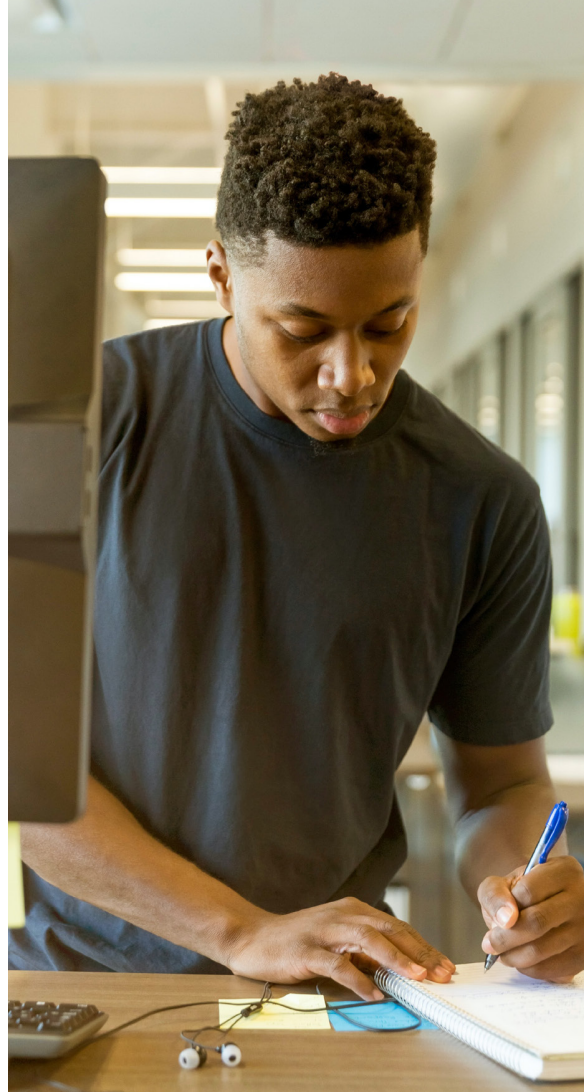
Student homelessness is a complex social problem with multiple causes. Further, student homelessness is a growing public policy issue throughout the United States. Homelessness among public school students in kindergarten through grade 12 more than doubled from 2007 to 2013, reaching a total of more than 1.5 million in the 2017-2018 school year.¹⁶

COVID-19

The State of Kansas issued a stay-at-home order in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Public schools transitioned to online learning systems for the balance of the 2019-2020 school year.

COVID-19 not only affected the learning mode offered students, it also caused

widespread economic distress through loss of jobs. The loss of family income caused by the pandemic is likely to have an impact for months or even years to come. This Assessment includes information and analysis based on pre-COVID-19 and COVID-19 conditions.



14 National Center for Homeless Education, *ibid.*

15 U.S. Department of Education: Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service. *Results in Brief: State and District Implementation of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program.* February 2015.

16 National Center for Homeless Education, *Federal Data Summary School Years 2015-2016 through 2017-2018: Education for Homeless Children and Youth.* University of North Carolina Greensboro. January 2020.

IMPACT KCK OVERVIEW

Impact KCK¹⁷ has won national and regional recognition for effectiveness in addressing homelessness among public school students and their families. Among the many ways in which Impact KCK has been recognized is in a Public Broadcasting System (PBS) Frontline program segment and receipt of a Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Thrive! award.

The vision that became Impact KCK began in 2014 when the Kansas Department for Children and Families engaged the services of Bob Woodward, legendary civil rights activist and community development expert, to mentor Kansas communities in addressing critical local issues. More than 80 organizations initially came together to work with Mr. Woodward. By early 2015, the group had coalesced into the Kansas Community Leadership Enterprise (KCLE) and determined it would address student homelessness in KCKPS. The group also determined it would employ the Collective Impact Model for Community Change in this important work.

KCLE members elected Avenue of Life, a faith-based nonprofit organization located in central Kansas City, Kansas as the backbone organization for the Impact KCK program. A backbone organization is a special form of coordinating organization that facilitates the work of partner



organizations through continuous communication, shared measurement, and other activities.

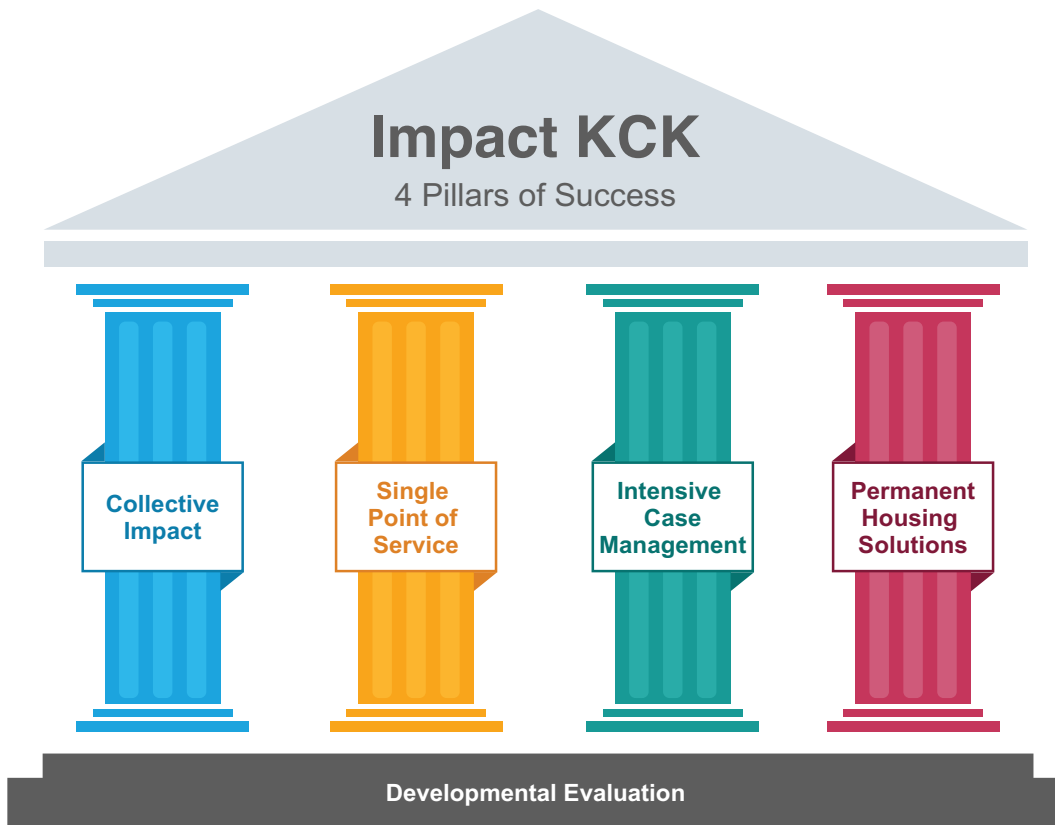
Impact KCK launched in August 2015 with no new funding. In other words, the backbone and partner organizations came together and began serving homeless students and families using only the resources they already had on hand. Over time, Avenue of Life has written many successful grant applications and received generous donations from individuals and organizations who want to make a difference in Wyandotte County. Avenue of Life has also worked with partner organizations to support their grant-writing efforts. These efforts continue on a daily basis.

17 Impact KCK was adopted as the program name in May 2018. Prior to that time, the community segment of the program was referred to as Impact Wednesdays, while the KCKPS component was referred to as 1400 Diplomas. The single program name Impact KCK better represents the seamless relationship between the community and Wyandotte County school districts in serving homeless students and families.

4 Pillars of Success

Impact KCK's success in ending homelessness for so many Wyandotte County children, youth, and families is based on 4 Pillars of Success. The absence of any one of these pillars would substantially reduce the program's effectiveness. Thus, understanding the contribution each pillar makes to Impact KCK's success is critical to any assessment or evaluation of this innovative community model for collaboration.

Figure 1: Impact KCK 4 Pillars of Success



Anne R. Williamson © 2019

Pillar 1: Collective Impact Model for Community Change

The skillful application of the Collective Impact Model for Community Change is one of Impact KCK's 4 Pillars of Success. The Collective Impact Model for Community Change (sometimes known as the Collective Impact Model for Social Change) was introduced in 2011 by philanthropic foundation consultants John Kania and Mark Kramer.¹⁸ The purpose of the Collective Impact Model is to harness the assets of a community in a strategic and disciplined way to address complex social problems.

18 Kania, John and Mark Kramer. "Collective Impact." *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 9, no. 1 (2011): 36-41.

Kania and Kramer provided the following Five Conditions of Collective Impact Success:

1. Shared agenda
2. Shared measurement systems
3. Mutually reinforcing activities
4. Continuous communication
5. Backbone organization

The consistent and effective application of the Collective Impact Model has been a key factor in Impact KCK's success from its launch in August 2015 to the present. The Collective Impact Model facilitates effective collaboration and innovation found in the other Pillars of Success.

Pillar 2: Single Point of Service

A single point of service is the second Pillar of Success. Once a family has been referred to Impact KCK, an Impact KCK Navigator makes contact and gathers intake information. The Navigator then sets up the family with a targeted set of partner organizations and services at the next Impact Wednesday. Impact Wednesday is single point of service for Impact KCK families hosted by Avenue of Life, the Impact KCK backbone organization.

Instead of sending families to multiple locations to get the assistance they need, Impact KCK's single point of service allows needs to be met on a single day in a single location. Families who are stressed due to housing instability and other emergency needs are unlikely to access all services necessary if they must travel to multiple locations. By creating a single point of service, Impact KCK greatly enhances the likelihood that

all necessary services and resources will be accessed.

Pillar 3: Intensive Case Management

Intensive case management is another hallmark of the Impact KCK program. Without it, Impact KCK's effectiveness would be substantially reduced. Impact KCK Navigators provide intensive case management services, and each family develops a close working relationship with their Navigator. This builds trust between the program and those served, another essential ingredient in ending homelessness.

Intensive case management means that the Navigator walks side-by-side with each family throughout their journey to housing stability. The Navigator identifies family needs at the outset of this journey. The Navigator then matches each family with partner organizations providing services they need and for which they are eligible. This means that **each family will experience a "Yes" with every partner organization** with which they meet on Impact Wednesdays and beyond. This is far different than the traditional case management model, where families are referred to organizations that **may** have services or resources for which they qualify. Thus, families avoid experiencing stress and disappointment by referrals to organizations where they may be ineligible or where organizations do not have sufficient remaining resources to serve them.

The Navigator's role also enhances program effectiveness by ensuring that partner organizations only receive referrals from eligible families for whom the organization has sufficient

resources available. This means that partner organizations can better focus their activities and avoid administrative bottlenecks.

As families progress throughout the year-long Impact KCK program, they require fewer consultations with the Navigator. However, the Navigator is always on tap for support and encouragement, and where necessary, additional resources. Finally, the power of intensive case management is enhanced by the continued availability of Impact KCK services once a family has completed the one-year program. *Impact KCK remains available to families through the high school graduation of the youngest child in the family.*

Pillar 4: Permanent Housing Solutions

Impact KCK includes a permanent housing solution as the fourth Pillar of Success. The initial *Impact KCK Assessment*¹⁹ showed the importance of including assistance in reaching a permanent housing solution when addressing student and family homelessness. Programs without a permanent housing solution may address some emergency needs, but they will not lead to the 95% housing stability rate achieved through Impact KCK.

Affordable housing that meets basic housing quality standards is scarce in Wyandotte County. Further, housing that is affordable through government subsidies or the Housing Choice Voucher (the federal programs formerly known as Section 8 Housing Voucher and Certificates) is in very short supply.



Impact KCK Navigators and Avenue of Life leadership have developed strong working relationships with reputable landlords willing to work with Impact KCK families over the years. This has helped to make available affordable, decent housing opportunities that otherwise would not exist. Key factors in building these relationships is that landlords know (1) Impact KCK families have had classes covering important issues such as housing and family budgeting; (2) Impact KCK families have regular follow-ups with their Navigator once they are per-

19 Williamson, Anne R. *Impact KCK Assessment: Reducing Student Homelessness through Collective Impact*. L.P. Cookingham Institute of Urban Affairs, Henry W. Bloch School of Management, University of Missouri-Kansas City. October 2018. Available for download at: <https://www.avenueoflife.org/impact-kck.html>.

manently housed; and (3) Avenue of Life, the Impact KCK backbone organization, will make any necessary repairs free of charge if any tenant damages the landlord's property.

The lack of a sufficient supply of government-supported affordable housing solutions in Wyandotte County means that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, most Impact KCK families reached their permanent housing solution without public funding. Instead, families who were ready for a permanent housing solution received the security deposit and first month's rent through private funds raised by Avenue of Life, the backbone organization. COVID-19 resulted in federal CARES Act funds availability in Wyandotte County. Federal Emergency Solutions Grant Homeless Prevention (ESG-HP) funds also became available during the pandemic and were used to house some Impact KCK families. Overall, some Impact KCK families have reached a permanent housing solution through public funds, while others continue to do so through private funds raised by Avenue of Life.

Foundation for Success: Developmental Evaluation

The 4 Pillars of Success are supported by an important foundation: developmental evaluation.²⁰ Developmental evaluation facilitates innovation and program success through a working relationship between an evaluator and program decision makers.²¹ In other words, instead of waiting for a prescribed period of time to produce an evaluation, an evaluator or



evaluation team works closely with program decision makers on a regular basis in providing real-time data analysis and other feedback essential to designing innovations, addressing challenges, and identifying emerging issues. Without the real-time ability to reflect on program accomplishments, challenges, and emerging issues, a community program intended to address one or more complex social issues will not reach or maintain the same level of effectiveness it would with the support of this foundation.

²⁰ Developmental evaluation may also be referred to as design-based implementation research.

²¹ Patton, Michael Quinn. *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*. New York: The Guilford Press, 2011.

²² Kania and Kramer, *ibid*.

School Districts

A critical outcome of the Impact KCK program is that school districts are able to focus on the job of educating students. This is made possible because the school districts served by Impact KCK screen and refer students and families to the program for services secure in the knowledge that those they refer will get the assistance they need.

It is important for anyone seeking to understand the Impact KCK program to know that it is the *community* providing services and resources for McKinney-Vento students and their families (as well as those at risk of homelessness). Thus, while school districts are important partners in making referrals and remaining in contact with Impact KCK leadership, **the goal of the community initiative is to relieve school district personnel from the responsibility of meeting social service and housing needs so that they can focus on the important task of educating their students.**

Backbone Organization

Avenue of Life continued to serve as the Impact KCK backbone organization in the 2019-2020 school year. As noted in Kania and Kramer's Five Conditions for Collective Impact Success²², coordination by a backbone organization is essential for communities addressing complex social problems such as student homelessness.

Impact KCK Partner Meetings. Avenue of Life continued to host monthly Impact KCK partner meetings in the 2019-2020

school year, transitioning to virtual meetings once the pandemic reached Kansas. These monthly meetings allow the backbone and partner organizations to share information about achievements, challenges, and emerging issues. This is part of the continuous communication necessary for collective impact success. It is also an important part of how Impact KCK is able to not only be effective, but also continue to innovate.

Staffing. Avenue of Life employed six (6) Impact KCK Navigators, one (1) Youth Services Coordinator, and two (2) Social Work Interns during the 2019-2020 school year. The Impact KCK Navigators are located at Avenue of Life's Equipping Center in central Kansas City, Kansas, while the Youth Services Coordinator has an office on site at Wyandotte High School (KCKPS). Impact KCK Navigators and the Youth Services Coordinator are led by Avenue of Life's Operations Director.

Housing. The backbone organization makes it possible for Impact KCK families in need of housing to reach a permanent housing solution by providing the security deposit and first month's rent. Most Impact KCK families do not receive any federal, state, or local government assistance or subsidy for housing. This shifted in the last four months of the school year, as COVID-19 began impacting Impact KCK families. Federal funds to address economic distress due to COVID-19 became available under provisions of the CARES Act.²³ CARES Act funds were available to be used flexibly in serving Impact KCK families with housing and other needs. Federal funds

²³ The CARES Act was signed into law in March 2020 and made available funds that may be used flexibly to address economic distress experienced by families and individuals due to the pandemic.

were also made available through the Emergency Solutions Grant Homeless Prevention program (ESG-HP).

Fund Raising. Avenue of Life continued to engage in significant fund raising activities as the Impact KCK backbone in 2019-2020, raising close to \$1.3 million to support the program. This figure includes salaries for Impact KCK Navigators, the Youth Services Coordinator, Social Work Interns, and direct services to families. It excludes salaries for the Executive Director, Operations Director, and Business Development Director.

Further, Avenue of Life raised more than \$245,000 to support the incubator space within Avenue of Life's Equipping Center. The incubator space houses partner organizations and includes classrooms for Impact KCK classes. It also includes space for the computer lab and barber services provided to Impact KCK families.

Hundreds of donors participate in funding Impact KCK and the backbone organization. It would not be possible to address student and family homelessness without the support of these donors.

Partner Organizations

More than 52 partner organizations continued to be a part of Impact KCK and worked with the backbone to produce another year of transformation for students and families experiencing homelessness. A list of Impact KCK partner organizations is provided in Appendix 1.

The commitment and adaptability of

Impact KCK partner organizations continued to make it possible to provide seamless operations for the families served. The multi-sector coalition of Impact KCK partners continued to work very closely with the backbone organization to provide an array of wraparound services tailored to each family's specific needs. These services continued despite the pandemic.

Impact KCK Backbone Leadership Team

Information about Avenue of Life's Impact KCK leadership team is provided in Appendix 2 of this *Assessment*.

Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix (Adapted for Impact KCK)

Impact KCK backbone and partner organizations adapted the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix for use by Impact KCK early in the program's history. This matrix is used by Impact KCK Navigators in serving those referred. It is also used to support ongoing developmental evaluation work, including the determination of program capacity through analysis of current capacity compared with current and future community needs. The Self-Sufficiency Matrix is provided in Appendix 3.

Impact KCK Logic Model

The Impact KCK Logic Model provides additional information on the program and its application to student and family homelessness. The Logic Model can be found in Appendix 4.

SCHOOL DISTRICT MCKINNEY-VENTO DATA

The federal McKinney-Vento Act requires all public school districts to collect and report data on students identified as homeless under the Act. Any student who is identified as homeless during the school year must be included in the count submitted to state homeless coordinators, regardless of whether the student remains homeless. Thus, the count may include students who were homeless for one day as well as those who were homeless for much longer periods during the school year.

KCKPS innovated in its McKinney-Vento data collection during the 2019-2020 school year by providing information beyond that required by the federal government. The additional information allows a better understanding of the reported data and the levels of crisis facing students.

A significant challenge in understanding McKinney-Vento data is that some students may need to be classified as homeless under the Act in order to enroll in public school. For instance, a child who is stably housed with a grandparent may be designated as homeless because the grandparent is not the child’s legal guardian. In this situation, the grandparent’s lack of legal guardianship means that the child is classified as an unaccompanied homeless youth, although he or she is stably housed and secure.

Other students may be doubled-up with family or friends. While these arrangements can often be unstable and lead to literal homelessness, there are times when they are viable, long-term living situations. An example is when a family chooses to be a three-generation household.

Table 1 presents data for homeless students and families in the Kansas City Public Schools for 2019-2020.

Table 1: Kansas City Kansas Public Schools McKinney-Vento Homeless Data, 2019-2020

Description	Number
Number of Homeless Students	860
Number of Homeless Children Not Yet Enrolled in School ²⁴	108
Number of Homeless Families	450
Unaccompanied Youth Age 16 and Older	50
Unaccompanied Youth Under Age 16	29
Students from Outside United States	48
Families from Outside United States	35
Families from Other Wyandotte County School Districts	12
Students in Families Referred to Impact KCK	442
Families Referred to Impact KCK	174

Source: Kansas City Kansas Public Schools

²⁴ This includes infants from birth through pre-school-age children.

In the 2019-2020 school year, Jessica Smith, LMSW, the McKinney-Vento Liaison for the Kansas City Kansas Public Schools, developed a system for describing the level of housing stability experienced by homeless students. The system includes the following categories:

- **Non-Crisis:** Students in this category require McKinney-Vento designation in order to enroll in public school but have a stable living situation without the need for assistance. For instance, a student who is living in a stable situation with a relative who is not the child’s legal guardian would be in the Non-Crisis category.
- **Level 1:** Student has a safe place to live. This may include being “doubled up” in a stable living situation. For example, a student whose family is voluntarily living in a three-generation household would be in the Level 1 category.
- **Level 2:** Student is living in a shelter, transitional living facility, hotel, or other temporary living arrangements.
- **Level 3:** Student is living in a place not designed for human habitation. This may include living in a car, outdoors, or other place not intended for a human dwelling space.

Table 2 presents homeless student data categorized by level of housing stability.

Table 2: Homeless Students by Level of Housing Stability, 2019-2020

Description	Number
Non-Crisis Homeless Students	52
Level 1 Homeless Students	671
Level 2 Homeless Students	116
Level 3 Homeless Students	22

Source: Kansas City Kansas Public Schools

The majority of McKinney-Vento students (723 or 84%) in the Kansas City Public Schools were stably housed in 2019-2020, although many were doubled up. It is important to understand that students who are classified as Level 1 in Table 2 are in stable situations, regardless of whether they are doubled up.

About 13.5% (116) of McKinney-Vento students were living in a shelter, transitional living facility, hotel, or other temporary accommodation during the school year. Twenty-two (22 or less than 3%) were living in space not designed for human habitation.

IMPACT KCK RESULTS

Measuring Program Effectiveness

It is important to understand that the best measure of Impact KCK program effectiveness is the proportion (percentage) of families remaining stably housed once they have attained a permanent housing solution. Total number of MKV students is **not** a measure that can be used without taking great care in interpretation. As discussed in the section on School District McKinney-Vento Data, this is because there are many reasons why a student is designated as MKV. Thus, the analysis of total number of MKV students can obscure important information.

Additional data useful for analyzing Impact KCK’s results include several measures presented in Table 3.

Impact KCK Results

Impact KCK families who reached a permanent housing solution had a **consistent 95% housing stability rate** prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Housing stability data since the advent of the pandemic is not available at the time of publication. Table 3 provides information about the number of Impact KCK families reached, housed, and employed.



Table 3: Impact KCK Families Reached, Housed and Employed

Indicator	2019-2020	2015-2020
Families Reached	185	1,446
Families Housed	76	448
Families Employed	40	347
Homeless Prevention Families ²⁵	62	N/A

Families Reached indicates the number of families who (1) were referred to Impact KCK by the school district; and (2) followed through on the referral

²⁵ Impact KCK began collecting homeless prevention data during the 2019-2020 school year. Thus, homeless prevention data for earlier years are not available.

and began receiving services. Impact KCK reached 185 families in the 2019-2020 school year. Further, the program reached more than 1,400 families from its launch in August 2015 to June 2020.

Families Housed indicates the number of families who were provided a permanent housing solution through Impact KCK. It should be noted that some families served by Impact KCK do not require a permanent housing solution. This may be because they have housing but require help in sustaining it at the time they are referred to Impact KCK. Some families have other reasons for not requiring Impact KCK help with a permanent housing solution.

Impact KCK housed 76 families in the 2019-2020 school year. The program housed a total of 446 families from August 2015 to June 2020.

A primary reason for housing instability is lack of employment. The Families Employed indicator reflects the number of parents or guardians employed through Impact KCK. Impact KCK employed 40 families in the 2019-2020 school year and a total of 342 families from August 2015 to June 2020.

Impact KCK began tracking the number of families served through homeless prevention services in the 2019-2020 school year. These families do not qualify as homeless under the McKinney-Vento program, but they are at risk of homelessness. The families in need of Impact KCK homeless prevention services are referred by the school district.

Impact KCK Youth Services

The Impact KCK backbone organization, Avenue of Life, placed a Youth Services Coordinator on site at Wyandotte High School in 2018. This continued in the 2019-2020 school year. Having a Coordinator on site who is in regular contact with high school students facilitates reaching homeless youth, particularly those who may otherwise be reluctant to disclose their situation. Table 4 provides information about students served by the Youth Services Coordinator in the 2019-2020 school year.

Table 4: Impact KCK Youth Services, 2019-2020

Activity	Number of Students
Case-managed students (total, including archived)	58
Actively case-managed students	38
Unaccompanied homeless youth	23
Homeless prevention youth	4
Homeless grade 12 youth	13
Case-managed seniors graduated May 2020	13
Graduation Rate for Case-Managed Seniors: 100%	

Case-managed students are those who (1) have had more than three check-ins during the school year; and (2) received one or more services during the school year.

Impact KCK served a total of 58 case-management homeless students in

26 U.S. Census Bureau *QuickFacts* available at <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/wyandottecountykansas#qf-headnote-b>.

the 2019-2020 school year. Of these students, 38 were actively case managed as of May 2020. Five students were inactive. Of the inactive case management students, four were unable to be reached during the pandemic and one returned to live with a parent but stopped attending school. Case management files were archived for 15 students. Twelve (12) of the students with archived files transferred to other school districts during 2019-2020. Two (2) students had files archived mid-year after returning to live with parents or guardians who refused services. One (1) student left school to save money to bring family to the U.S. but did not follow through with services to which they were referred by the Youth Services Coordinator.

All 13 of the students who were actively case-managed seniors in 2019-2020 graduated in May 2020. Thus, actively case-managed 12th graders had a 100% graduation rate.

New Capacity to Serve Spanish-Speakers

Avenue of Life and Impact KCK have served Wyandotte County's Spanish-speaking residents—including undocumented residents—since their launches. This is especially important, given that the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 29.8% of the County's population was Hispanic in 2019.²⁶ Moreover, Wyandotte's Hispanic population grew by nearly 13% between 2010 and 2019.

Despite Avenue of Life and Impact KCK having a history of serving the County's Spanish-speaking residents, the tragic

shooting deaths in a community bar in Kansas City, Kansas, in October 2019 made it clear that more was needed. Avenue of Life moved quickly to help the community heal. Avenue of Life covered the cost of funerals for several of the shooting victims and engaged the services of the nonprofit Avance Community Center to increase Avenue's capacity to serve Wyandotte's Spanish-speaking residents. In addition, Avenue of Life hired the CEO of Avance Community Center to be a full-time, Spanish-speaking Navigator for Impact KCK families.

Avenue of Life and Impact KCK have increased the array of services available to Spanish-speaking residents, including undocumented residents, through the partnership with Avance Community Center. Overall, Avenue of Life and Impact KCK have demonstrated the ability to quickly adapt and innovate in service to Wyandotte County's Spanish-speaking community.

Moreover, the new partnership with Avance Community Center opens up the opportunity to work with Wyandotte's Spanish-speaking community by building bridges of trust and educational opportunities that help empower the community for sustainability. Avance is helping to educate the Spanish-speaking community about available resources they can access, including educating community members about how to apply for and receive these critical resources. Avance is a voice for those who cannot communicate in English; in turn, this allows the Spanish-speaking community to access services they once thought were unreachable.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

In early 2020, the coronavirus pandemic upended life as we knew it. For families who were already struggling to survive, the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19 required Impact KCK backbone and partner organizations to quickly adapt and innovate in the delivery of emergency assistance and other services necessary to help families maintain housing stability or achieve it.

There were more than 1,320 Impact KCK families at the outset of the pandemic. As backbone organization, Avenue of Life took on the responsibility to deliver food, clothing, hygiene items, and other necessities to the door of each family in need. This involved having Avenue's Kansas City, Missouri, team—which normally works on furniture pick-up/delivery and mattress recycling—participate in this important work. Kansas City Kansas Public Schools joined Avenue of Life in making deliveries through their assisted transportation network.

Status Check-Ins

Impact KCK Navigators and other Avenue of Life staff began conducting status check-ins by phone early in the pandemic. These check-ins have proved essential in determining family needs and finding ways to address those needs. The check-in calls also support families' mental health in a time of significant stress.

Access to Federal Stimulus Checks

Some Impact KCK families required assistance in obtaining the first round of federal government CARES Act stimulus checks provided as part of COVID-19 relief. The need for assistance in accessing the federal stimulus arose for those who had not recently filed a federal income tax return or had not had a federal income tax refund direct deposited into their bank account in recent years. Impact KCK Navigators and other Avenue of Life staff provided help with this critical function when needed.

Access to Unemployment Insurance

Some Impact KCK families became unemployed due to the pandemic. Those who required assistance in applying for unemployment insurance payments received help with their applications from Impact KCK Navigators and other Avenue of Life staff.

Emergency Food and Other Necessities

Food banks and many Impact KCK partner organizations providing other necessities were often closed for walk-in services during the earliest months of the pandemic. Due to supply chain issues facing grocers and the transportation and financial limitations faced by families, Avenue of Life and Impact KCK needed to find a way to collect and distribute essential supplies directly to Impact KCK families. Avenue of Life sent out box trucks to donation drives and partnering organizations to be sorted at the Equipping Center for distribution. Impact KCK and KCKPS personnel delivered food, clothing, PPE, toilet paper, personal

hygiene items, laundry detergent, household items, and hygiene products to Impact KCK families and other families Monday through Saturday throughout Wyandotte County.

Financial Resources

Avenue of Life, Impact KCK's backbone organization, quickly provided various forms of financial assistance to families in need during the pandemic. Avenue of Life paid for utility bills and other household expenses—including child care—as a means of helping families remain stable despite the pandemic.

Online Schooling

The rapid transition from in-person to online schooling meant many families required help in navigating the new world of online education. Impact KCK Navigators and other Avenue of Life staff provided this assistance when needed.

Continued Training for Parents and Guardians

Classes on housing, family budgeting, employment, and healthcare are an important part of the Impact KCK program. Prior to the pandemic, these classes were offered on site at Avenue of Life's Equipping Center in central Kansas City, Kansas.

Rather than abandon these important learning opportunities offered to parents and guardians, Avenue of Life leadership provided essential education by telephone and by virtual sessions conducted online with Zoom.

Emotional Support Network

One of the most important resources Impact KCK offered families during the pandemic has been the presence of an emotional support network while they worked to address historically significant challenges in daily living. This support has often been provided in the form of “brainstorming” with families for solutions to the issues they face in securing and maintaining stability. The pandemic has made life challenging for families in all walks of life. However, it is much more challenging for those who may have only recently achieved housing stability or have not yet achieved it.

Knowing that their experiences are validated by the professionals who work as part of Impact KCK and that help is available is a critical factor in families successfully weathering the pandemic. Further, the emotional support network provided by Impact KCK professionals is so much more powerful because families have already built trusting relationships with individuals and organizations through program participation.

COVID-19 Response Results

Table 5 provides details of the necessities delivered to the door of Impact KCK families and others in need in March, April, May, and June 2020.

Table 5: Necessities Delivered During Pandemic, March-June 2020

Item Delivered	Number
Food packs	1,922
Individual meals in food packs	46,137
Frozen meal packs	410
Individual meals in frozen meal packs	3,283
Hygiene items	7,560

Given the challenges of the pandemic, many Wyandotte families experienced stable food supplies who would otherwise have gone hungry without this assistance.



CONTINUED PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Impact KCK continued to innovate and serve Wyandotte County students, families, and youth in need in the 2019-2020 school year. Impact KCK began the 2019-2020 school year on a strong foundation that had been built through the 4 Pillars of Success, including the skilled application of the Collective Impact Model for Community Change, social service innovations, and the use of developmental evaluation to facilitate continuous improvement in program design and implementation.

The most important measure of Impact KCK's continued success is the indicator related to percentage of families who reach a permanent housing solution and remain stably housed. Prior to the pandemic, this figure remained at 95%. This is an indicator of extraordinary success in facilitating successful outcomes for Wyandotte County homeless students and their families. In addition, the 100% graduation rate for seniors served by the Impact KCK Youth Services Coordinator at Wyandotte High School is another indicator of extraordinary program effectiveness.

Beyond the extraordinary results produced with regard to housing stability and graduations rates among seniors served by the Impact KCK Youth Services Coordinator, Impact KCK continued to produce substantial progress in reaching families, helping

families become employed, and helping them attain a permanent housing solution.

Further, Avenue of Life's expansion of its capacity to serve Spanish-speaking Wyandotte residents is another indication of effectiveness. Avenue of Life stepped in and helped a grieving community when tragedy struck in October 2019, and it built on these relationships to expand Impact KCK services to Spanish-speaking families, including those with undocumented family members. Avenue of Life also brought the Avance Community Center on board as a new partner organization, and this further expanded Impact KCK's capacity to serve members of the Spanish-speaking community.

When the pandemic hit Kansas in early 2020, Avenue of Life, Wyandotte's public school districts, and many partner organizations worked together to ensure that emergency assistance needs were met and stable Impact KCK families would remain so. They also continued to assist Impact KCK families working towards housing stability.

It is fortunate that Impact KCK was in its fifth year of operation when the COVID-19 pandemic reached Wyandotte County. Mature, effective systems for serving children, families, and youth were already in place and were quickly adapted to the new normal of pandemic living. These adaptations are further proof of Impact KCK's effectiveness.

IMPACT KCK AND THE FUTURE

Impact KCK's work to address the needs of homeless students and families in Wyandotte County continues. Many experts predict that the world following the pandemic will not be the same as it was before it. The lessons learned during this historically challenging time will continue to be used by the Impact KCK backbone and partner organizations for the purpose of continuous improvement in program effectiveness.



APPENDIX 1: IMPACT KCK PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

- Avenue of Life (Backbone Organization)
- Adventure Dental, Vision & Orthodontics
- Alliance Workforce
- Allied Global Services
- Avance Community Center
- Barefoot Mission
- Blessings Abound Thrift Store
- Boys & Girls Club
- Brothers in Blue Reentry
- Caring For Kids Kansas City
- Colonial Presbyterian Church
- Community Health Council Of Wyandotte
- CTV Freedom Initiative
- Duchesne Clinic
- Economic Opportunity Foundation, Inc
- Firm Foundations
- Flourish Furnishings Ministry
- Foundations-Helping Hands Project
- Happy Bottoms
- Harvesters
- Heartland 180
- Heart to Heart International
- Junior League of Kansas City, Missouri
- Kansas City Kansas Community College
- Kansas City Kansas Housing Authority
- Kansas City Kansas Police Department
- Kansas City Kansas Public Schools
- Kansas City Young Matrons
- Kansas Department for Children And Families
- Kansas Legal Services
- KC Dream Center
- KVC Health Systems
- Love Outreach Ministries
- L.P. Cookingham Institute of Urban Affairs
- McCrummen Immigration Law Group
- Rachel's Tea House
- Safe Families for Children
- Salvation Army Pathway of Hope
- Structured Support LLC
- The Small Hinge
- Turner Unified School District
- Unified Government of Wyandotte County
- United Methodist Church of The Resurrection
- United Way - Wyandotte County
- Veronica's Voice
- Vibrant Health Wyandotte
- Village Initiative
- Village Presbyterian Church
- Westside Family Church
- Wyandot Behavioral Health Network
- Wyandotte County Sheriff's Department
- Zoe's House Adoption Agency

APPENDIX 2: IMPACT KCK BACKBONE LEADERSHIP TEAM

Desiree Monize, CEO, Avenue of Life: As the Chief Executive Officer of Avenue of Life, Desiree is the leader of the Impact KCK backbone agency. In this role, she leads the work of more than fifty partner organizations through the Collective Impact Model for Community Change.

Cameron Erlandson, COO, Avenue of Life: Cameron is Avenue’s Chief Operating Officer and the Director of the Impact KCK program. His responsibilities include oversight of Impact KCK staff, data management, and leading the incubator at the Avenue of Life Equipping Center. The Equipping Center houses Impact KCK staff, hosts events, and provides office and programming space for several grassroots agencies.

Derek Monize, Business Development Director, Avenue of Life: Derek is the primary grant writer. He also worked with Desiree Monize in designing the backbone role for Avenue of Life and Impact Wednesdays, Impact KCK’s single-point-of-service pillar.

Maria White, Impact KCK Lead Navigator: Maria leads the Navigator team’s role in Impact KCK, including taking the lead in the program’s intensive case management system that moves children and families from poverty to stability.

APPENDIX 3: ARIZONA SELF-SUFFICIENCY MATRIX AS ADAPTED FOR IMPACT KCK

The 16 family self-sufficiency domains used in the Impact KCK program appear below. They have been adapted from the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix.

- 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

Families are assessed on each domain using the following scale:

- 1 = In Crisis
- 2 = Vulnerable
- 3 = Safe
- 4 = Building Capacity
- 5 = Empowered

APPENDIX 4: IMPACT KCK LOGIC MODEL

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Initial Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
McKinney-Vento Referrals from School District	Impact Wednesday	# Households referred by the school district to Impact Wednesday	Education Outcomes: -Increase in KCKPS school attendance rates for Impact Wednesday participants	Education Outcomes: Impact Wednesday participants maintain attendance rates that are normalized to the district average	Education Outcomes:
	Connection to services and resources	# Households participating in Impact Wednesday	-Increase in high school graduation rates among KCKPS McKinney-Vento students who have participated in Impact KCK	Health & Self-Sufficiency behaviors increased as measured by the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix	Outcomes: Increase in rates of families & youth involved with Impact Wednesday
Impact KCK Backbone Organization Staff	Targeted referrals for services and resources	# Households referred for specific services	Health Outcomes: -Increased number of children and adults enrolled in health insurance	Outcomes: Baseline will be established during grant period for: -adults & children enrolled in health insurance -adults & children with a healthcare home -adults and children with a dental home -perception of healthcare access	Reduction of homeless children & youth in KCK Public School System
Impact KCK Navigator Client	Work with clients referred by Impact Navigators	# Children and adults signed up for health insurance coverage	-Increased number of children and adults with a healthcare home and dental home ----Improved attitudes and perceptions of importance of health care access		Health Outcomes Maintaining access to health care and use of primary care physician and dentist:
	Life skills classes	# Individuals in Mental Health Counseling	Self-Sufficiency Outcomes: -Increase in number of individuals who increase their income through employment	75% of Case Management participants will reach a ranking of Safe (3) for each of the following domains of the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix: • healthcare access • food access & life skills • housing security	Improved access to health care
		# Individuals in Life-skills classes	-Increase in number of households who maintain permanent housing		Improved food access
		# Households in Case Management			Self-Sufficiency
		# People in Internship & Job Training			
		# Households who obtain permanent housing			
Trauma-informed approach	Trauma-informed parenting classes and mental health counseling	# Adults in trauma-informed parenting classes # Children with parents or guardians in trauma-informed parenting classes #Adults in mental health counseling #Children and youth in mental health counseling			Decrease in unemployment rate in KCKS Improved housing security

IMPACT KCK ASSESSMENT 2019-2020:

A FIVE-YEAR MILESTONE IN SERVING
HOMELESS STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

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