

Community Report

Ucs Celebrates 40 Years

This special issue of the UCS Community Report is dedicated to celebrating the success of our 40 year partnership with the community. On behalf of the current UCS board and staff, we express deep gratitude to the more than 300 community members who served on the board and provided staff leadership between 1967 and 2007. Their vision and commitment were steadfast in the pursuit of a community where all people have access to the services they need to live safe, productive lives.

"UCS has far exceeded our fondest dreams 40 years ago."

Rev. Robert Meneilly,
UCS board president
1971-72

UCS History

The availability of human services reflects a community's commitment to the unique needs of its residents. Civic leaders in the mid-1960s recognized that the burgeoning Johnson County, Kansas suburb would benefit from a well-planned, coordinated human service response.

Originally a division of the metropolitan planning council affiliated with United Way, UCS' partnership with United Way formed the core of its early work, to include managing the allocation of funds to support local agencies. In the early 1980s, UCS became an independent nonprofit corporation and forged partnerships with the Board of County Commissioners and Johnson County cities to allocate public dollars to human service needs. United Way and local governments remain key partners today.

During its first two decades, UCS was instrumental in creating a dozen nonprofit agencies to address unmet needs. As the community human service system evolved, UCS shifted its efforts to bolstering existing services through community-wide strategic planning and service integration strategies.

UCS has published more than 40 landmark studies, convened hundreds of meetings to improve service coordination, managed the allocation of \$45 million dollars, leveraged federal, state and local resources to support human service programs, led improvements in dozens of issue areas, successfully advo-

UCS founders and former presidents met to share their memories of UCS' role in this community's human service system. Attending from left to right: Pam Perilstein, Barbara Buehler, Ben Craig, Eleanor Lowe, Betty Keim, Jeff Ellis, Georgia Nesselrode, Fred Logan, Anne Debus.

cated for public policy changes, and informed thousands of people about needs in Johnson County. Working with individuals and groups -- United Way, city and county governments, human service providers, school districts, advocacy agencies, civic leaders and private citizens -- UCS has been the catalyst for creating lasting improvements that benefit the community's most vulnerable residents.

"Because of its unwavering focus on what is best for our community, UCS has achieved tremendous results where no other has."

Dick Bond, former Kansas State Senator

The UCS Advantage

For 40 years, UCS has been the catalyst and resource to ensure that the human service system meets the needs of residents. UCS keeps the community focused on important human service concerns that might otherwise be ignored until they reach crisis levels. By fostering alliances and partnerships between and among human service agencies, funders, state and local elected officials, and other stakeholders, UCS ensures that the human service impact on our community surpasses the accomplishments of a single entity.



UCS Achieves Positive Results Then and Now

UCS, through community planning strategies, has positively contributed to creating a community where all people have access to the services they need to live safe, productive lives.

Community Action Plans

1993..... *The Johnson County Blueprint for Families and Children* was the first comprehensive planning document published by UCS. Prior to the *Blueprint*, action plans focused on a single human service issue or age group.

Today..... UCS is convening the community to identify where and how to improve the response across the full spectrum of human service issues. *Navigating the Future, A Community Action Plan Focused on Human Services in Johnson County* was launched in June 2003. A second report was published in June 2007.

Early Childhood

1979..... UCS published *Who's Minding the Children*, which identified the need for quality, safe professional child care services in our rapidly growing County. The study resulted in the creation of this community's first child resource and referral organization.

Today..... Recognizing that the skills to succeed start long before children arrive at school, UCS is currently working to advance opportunities that enhance early childhood learning and development.

Child Abuse

1978..... Sponsored by UCS in the late 1970s, the Johnson County Coalition to Prevent Child Abuse offered the first county-wide child abuse prevention education program implemented in schools. The Coalition evolved into Sunflower House – Kansas' first child advocacy center.

Today..... UCS facilitates the Permanency Planning Council to improve the Child-in-Need-of-Care process by bringing key stakeholders together to share information and strengthen child safety strategies.

Youth Development

1997..... UCS spearheaded a new response to truancy as an outgrowth of *Making Children a Priority*, a comprehensive assessment

of community efforts on behalf of children, youth and their families. The Johnson County Children's Coordinating Council used the report to create the Truancy Initiative, a collaboration of school districts, the District Attorney's office, District Court and others, to develop a coordinated, county-wide approach to truancy.

Today..... The Children's Coordinating Council, comprised of human service providers and school personnel from every district, meets regularly under the leadership of UCS to improve services for children and youth.

Substance Abuse

1970..... UCS initiated this community's first drug prevention programming and advocated for the creation of the first local detoxification program.

Today..... To leverage resources and strengthen the response to substance abuse, UCS led the effort to create a collaborative funding pool among local governments to more effectively distribute state alcohol excise tax dollars to substance abuse treatment, intervention and prevention. Through the oversight of a community advisory board called the Drug and Alcoholism Council (DAC), nearly \$16 millions dollars have been distributed since 1980.

Homelessness

1992..... UCS conducted the first research to quantify homelessness in Johnson County and remains integrally involved today in leveraging the response to both prevent and respond to homelessness. The first homeless count in 1992 led to creation of this community's first homeless shelter, the Salvation Army's Family Lodge.

Today..... UCS played a lead role in the 1999 founding of the Johnson County Continuum of Care on Homelessness which continues to meet regularly. By fostering participation of 30 service providers and concerned residents, UCS has leveraged the value of collaborative problem-solving into nearly \$2 million in HUD funding and improved services.

“One of the things I particularly like about UCS is that it takes a very proactive and preventive approach toward addressing the problems in Johnson County.”

Paul Morrison, Kansas Attorney General

Report

Housing

1993.....UCS provided leadership for the creation of this community's first nonprofit housing developer -- the Johnson County Housing Coalition -- to expand permanent, affordable housing opportunities for households with limited incomes.

Today.....UCS advocates for the creation of a Johnson County housing trust fund -- a flexible, innovative tool to increase quality housing opportunities that fit the needs of today's low-to-moderate income workforce and special needs households.

Poverty

1996.....When significant federal welfare reform passed, UCS worked with emergency assistance providers to conduct a survey on the impact for Johnson County families. UCS was invited to present the study to the National Children's Defense Fund's annual conference in 1998. That year, UCS also led advocacy efforts for Kansas' adoption of a refundable state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a proven effective poverty fighting strategy.

Today.....UCS is active in efforts to connect modest income households with the skills and benefits that encourage employment, and safeguard economic security. For example, only an estimated 40 percent of persons eligible for Food Stamps access this source of nutrition assistance. UCS is working to expand the number of Johnson County households accessing this important resource.

Data and Research

1984.....UCS published, under the direction of board member Dr. Elaine Tatham, *An Environmental Scan: What Lies Ahead for Johnson County, Kansas*, a milestone for UCS' role in community research and data analysis.

Today.....UCS annually collects and analyzes a range of human service indicators to inform and influence human service policy, funding and practice, and publishes this information on its web site.

Meeting Emerging Needs

1973.....Aging To respond to the Older Americans Act, UCS obtained a state grant to establish a multi-county Area Agency on Aging. In 1978, UCS advocated for Johnson County's separation from the multi-county council, resulting in the creation of the Johnson County Area Agency on Aging.

1980.....Health Care UCS led the efforts to establish a health care safety net in Johnson County. Responding to growing concern from emergency assistance providers, UCS conducted the first study of the needs of uninsured residents. A UCS-led study committee developed action recommendations. The solution identified and implemented with UCS guidance was the Health Partnership Clinic of Johnson County.

2004.....Family Violence UCS provided project coordination to *Safe from the Start* that resulted in *Guidelines on the Co-Occurrence of Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment*. Recommendations encompassed specific action by more than 15 community partners that would improve safety for victims of family violence. One result is establishment of a Family Court within the 10th Judicial District to handle cases when the potential of co-occurring child maltreatment is found.

Today.....Respond to Changing Cultural Dynamics

Johnson County's cultural diversity is in the process of rapid transition. One in eight residents identifies with a racial or ethnic minority, compared with one in 20 such residents in 1990. UCS will be convening human service organizations to identify and strengthen approaches to cultural competence.

"UCS does not represent any single population, any specific service area, but rather works for the larger community interest...that is the unique value that UCS brings to us."

David Wiebe, Executive Director Johnson County Mental Health Center.

Partnerships

County and City Governments 1980 -- Today Building upon a partnership first established with County government in 1980, UCS sought the support of cities to create the Human Service Fund -- dollars pooled to aid nonprofit efforts that improve family and child safety, and/or promote economic stability. Managed by UCS, the Human Service Fund has awarded \$2.8 million dollars.

United Way 1967 -- Today Throughout UCS' history, UCS has partnered with United Way to strengthen investment in human services in Johnson County and across the metropolitan area.

What UCS Does

Because change is complex and takes time, UCS utilizes multiple strategies and looks at the community through a variety of lenses.

This "big-picture" perspective gives the community a roadmap to follow as it grapples with current and emerging needs.

UCS provides information, trends analysis and documentation to enhance community-wide planning and decision-making. When this information suggests the need for closer examination of specific issues, UCS responds by providing leadership for community action in the following ways:

- Convening people to focus cooperatively on the common good;
- Mobilizing community partners to improve human service delivery;
- Partnering with local governments to support allocation of funds to address human needs;
- Advocating for policy choices that effectively promote positive outcomes for people; and
- Leveraging resources to increase service capacity.



United Community Services
of Johnson County

12351 W. 96th Terrace, Suite 200
Lenexa, Kansas 66215
www.ucsjoco.org

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