



United
Way



United Way
of Greater Topeka

2021 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

UNITED WAY OF GREATER TOPEKA



[UNITEDWAYTOPEKA.ORG/ADVOCATE](https://www.unitedwaytopeka.org/advocate)



UNITED WAY OF GREATER TOPEKA

United Way brings together people, companies, and nonprofits to create positive sustainable change in our community. We work to solve issues no single donor, charity, or government agency can handle alone. By focusing on education, financial stability, and health, we help more children graduate and get stable jobs, help families become financially stable, and improve the overall health of our community.

OUR ADVOCACY POLICY

United Way, a policy leader in the nonprofit community, urges policy makers to set aside partisanship and work together to Advance the Common Good. By doing this we collectively achieve progress on issues important to those who invest in our community and those who receive services supported by our impact and basic needs grants.

United Way uses its convening and advocacy power to unite all our partners—business, labor, nonprofits, and community members—to identify and advance solutions for our community.

United Way engages in public policy and advocacy to give voice to our guiding values. It is our civic obligation to use our experience and knowledge to inform key decision-makers regarding policy, practices, and funding affecting our community.

WE ACHIEVE RESULTS BY:

- Partnering with federal, state, and local governments to improve our region;
- Educating and mobilizing the public to advance solutions for our community; and
- Engaging community partners in policy and investment opportunities.

POLICY AGENDA

United Way's Public Policy Agenda is our platform for issue advocacy at the state and local levels. We support and engage in federal advocacy that is consistent with the **United Way Worldwide (UWW) Agenda**. This agenda is part of a comprehensive effort to achieve our impact goals:

- More children are ready for kindergarten.
- More children are on track to be successful in reading and math.
- More individuals and families are financially stable.
- More individuals, families, and neighborhoods have access to healthy foods and beverages and opportunities for physical activity.

| LEADERSHIP ROLE | PARTNERSHIP ROLE | SUPPORT ROLE |
|---|---|--|
| Assume a leadership role, bringing visibility and advice to critical issues | Serve as a coalition partner, developing positions and advocating on issues | Monitor and respond to requests for support on issues aligned with United Way's mission and Impact Goals |

EDUCATION: Ensuring Child & Youth Success



United Way places its highest priority on working collectively with schools, businesses, and partners to ensure that children enter kindergarten ready to learn, are on track to be successful in reading and math, and graduate on time from high school with the skills necessary for college or a career. We know that high-quality education and the success of students has a lasting effect on our community.

United Way will support, monitor, and partner with organizations on issues that include:

- Expanding access to high-quality, affordable early-learning opportunities.
- Protecting and increasing investment in evidence-based home visitation programs and early literacy programs.
- Increasing family engagement and community-based involvement (wraparound supports, mentoring, etc.).
- Safeguarding adequate and equitable funding for K-12 schools.
- Improving effective out-of-school time experiences (summer, afterschool, etc.).
- Expanding nutrition programs, including summer lunch programs and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

FINANCIAL STABILITY: Promoting Stability and Self-Sufficiency



United Way understands that financial stability and economic opportunities for individuals and families affect the future success of our children and our community. We prioritize opportunities for job training and skill development that lead to sustaining employment, encouraging safe and healthy banking relationships, and providing them with the knowledge and resources to budget improve overall financial health.

United Way will support, monitor, and partner with organizations on issues that include:

- Increasing access to and strengthening job training and technical education programs.
- Strengthening income support programs that help individuals and families become self-sustaining, such as safe and affordable housing, child care assistance, weatherization, and food assistance.
- Promoting safe and affordable banking and financial services.
- Reducing “predatory lending” practices that hinder borrowers’ ability to repay debts.

United Way will engage in policy to preserve and increase access to the following programs:

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA)

Child Tax Credit (CTC)

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

HEALTH: Supporting Healthy Individuals and Neighborhoods



United Way knows that the health of individuals is a strong indicator of the health of our community. We work to ensure our community is healthy and has access to healthy foods and beverages, opportunities for physical activity, and policies and programs that help promote healthy individuals, families, and neighborhoods.

United Way will support, monitor, and partner with organizations on issues that include:

- Increasing access to affordable, quality health care and coverage for children and families.
- Preserving and expanding existing healthcare programs such as Medicaid and CHIP to reduce health disparities.
- Expanding access to optometry, auditory, and cognitive screenings and dental care for children.
- Establish a city and county Farm and Food Advisory Council to promote policies that increase access to and production of healthier foods and beverages.
- Increasing access to healthier foods and beverages through policy changes and investment in a healthier food system such as Healthy Food Financing and SNAP double-up programs.
- Increasing support to victims of labor or sex trafficking including resources to agencies providing direct services to trafficking victims.
- Increasing access to substance-use treatment and mental health services that focus on trauma-informed treatment and care.
- Re-authorizing Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA), and Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) which provides critical funding to agencies serving victims and survivors of domestic violence.

COMMUNITY: Ensuring a Solid Foundation



Positive sustainable change starts with a foundation of the most basic needs for our community. United Way further strengthens our community by investing in neighborhoods, encouraging volunteering and innovation, and fostering civic engagement.

United Way will support, monitor, and partner with organizations on issues that include:

- Investing in and strengthening work and family support programs in the areas of food assistance, safety from domestic violence, health and prescription assistance, and rent and utility assistance.
- Improving civic engagement through voter education, registration, mobilization, and protection, with a focus on strengthening voter engagement/turnout, including same-day voter registration.
- Preventing the elimination of tax deductions for donations to non-profits.
- Protecting the ability for State employees to use payroll deductions for items other than benefit premiums.

ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

Will Lawrence, Chair

Corey Carnahan

Misty Slater

Kathleen Marker

Marilyn Stanley

Adrienne Olejnik

United Way Staff

Jessica Lehnerr



Our Impact Goals



United Way
of Greater Topeka



Early Education

More children
are ready
for kindergarten.



On-Grade Achievement

More children
are on track
to be successful in
reading and math.



Financial Stability

More individuals
and families are
financially stable.



Health

More individuals,
families and
neighborhoods
have access to
healthy foods and
beverages and
opportunities for
physical activity.



Ongoing support for Basic Needs assistance helps those in crisis find stable ground and start planning for the future.

For more information, or to get involved, email advocacy@unitedwaytopeka.org



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