

Cross-Cutting: Peer Supports Initiatives

Objective 7.2: Increase the number of individuals receiving peer supports through Title V-sponsored programs by 5% annually through 2025.

Activities During Federal Fiscal Year 2023

Pregnancy and Postpartum Peer & Social Networks: In partnership with Wichita State University's Community Engagement Institute (CEI), the entity who manages the [Kansas Support Groups](#) website, Title V encouraged individuals to search for support groups that meet their needs and encouraged support groups to register on the site, so individuals can find and participate in their groups. Title V also continued to promote the [Perinatal Support Group Guidebook](#) for communities interested in establishing a support group.

Additionally, Title V continued to connect pregnant women and new mothers through the KPCC model, which allows mothers to connect with one another during this important time and share lived experiences in an authentic and supportive environment. Plans to extend the program past birth continued to be developed to provide an opportunity for mothers to share birth stories as well as postpartum struggles – reinforcing a network that can reduce isolation and promote healing and resilience. For women not participating in this, Title V staff vetted and promoted secure and safe peer support options through social media, training and marketing including those offered through PSI.

Supporting You: A peer-to-peer support network that was developed by the FAC based on their desires to find connections with other parents who had gone through the same or similar life circumstances. This informal peer-to-peer program was designed to offer a variety of opportunities for authentic connections. The system was set up to include expansion for new programs to join the network and offer connections for different populations, each program with a specific target population is referred to as a Network Program and have their own program within the Supporting You network.



An ambitious 3-year plan for development and expansion of the Supporting You Network was planned to take place over SFY23-SFY25. Due to significant internal turnover, the capacity of the staff involved in the expansion process was limited and only a small amount of progress was made during FY23.

The current Network Programs already in the system are on hold for a review of the system. Those programs include the KS-SHCN program, Kansas School for the Deaf (KSD), and the FAC. However, there has been limited connections made and work is continuing through discussions with a current contractor for the Department of Children and Families (DCF) [FosterAdopt Connect](#). This organization provides support to foster, adoptive, and kinship families. They have provided suggestions and insight to the layout of the application, which would increase ease for applying families.

Systems Navigation Training for Families (SNTF): The Systems Navigation Training for families was halted in 2020 due to the COVID 19 pandemic but was reestablished in 2022. With the lessening of COVID-19 cases and availability of vaccinations, in-person trainings were able to resume throughout FY23. These fun and interactive one day trainings are designed for parents/caregivers of individuals with special needs to learn how to navigate the various systems of care while also gaining peer-to-peer support. SNTF are led by parents for parents/caregivers. See more information on these trainings in the CSHCN section.

Local MCH Agencies: The following are examples of how some of the local MCH grantee agencies have made progress toward objective 7.2 during the reporting period.

- Delivering Change is a local MCH program that continues to offer opportunities for peer-to-peer connection among the families they serve in Junction City and surrounding communities. They provided the following peer-to-peer supports:
 - DC Strollers was held monthly and convened moms, pregnant, postpartum or older, and their kids for a stroll around the park with various community agencies for a time of connection and support. Partnering community agencies included: Geary County WIC; Parents As Teachers; and New Parent Support.
 - Milk and Cookies for Mom was held as a one-time event for breastfeeding moms and their babies to enjoy cookies, activities, and connecting with others who are breastfeeding. The local breastfeeding coalition brought in a local photographer to take pictures for those moms interested moms in a keepsake photo of their breastfeeding journey. Delivering Change provided additional peer-to-peer support opportunities for fathers including Becoming a Dad classes and an annual fishing derby.
- Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE) supported family peer to peer connections through referrals to the Pregnancy and Post-Partum Support Center. Additionally, they provided written information and in-person education regarding post-partum depression and directed clients to support groups to best meet their individual needs. When indicated, they also referred to the Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA) and Safe Home for their peer support groups and other resources. For postpartum women struggling with breast feeding referrals were made to WIC's breastfeeding peer-support group.

- Neosho County Health Department held multiple social events for families they serve and for the broader community. They provided the following peer-to-peer supports:
 - Pizza and the Prince was an event in partnership with MyFamily, Aetna, Healthy Families and Early Head Start where families could have a meal together, participate in activities, and learn about community supports outside the health department.

Active Parenting classes were provided in partnership with other health department programs. The classes allowed parents to voice their challenges and see that they're not alone. Story Time was conducted at the local library in partnership with Healthy Families, My Family, Early Head Start, and Parents as Teachers.

Plans for Federal Fiscal Year 2025

Supporting You: The Supporting You Network was designed to increase peer-to-peer support throughout the state for a variety of populations and health conditions. The idea for Supporting You was originally developed by the Family Advisory Council (FAC) and Title V has worked for several years to try and bring the idea to fruition. However, due to a variety of challenges, the Title V team will begin looking for other opportunities to better support peer-to-peer connections. For 2025, the Family Systems Consultant will research other programs in the State that might be already engaging in peer-to-peer support work that Title V could help to support or advance.