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Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition Awarded Grant to Create Clinical Lactation Training Program

MANHATTAN, Kan., June 30, 2021 – The Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition received an Impact Grant from the Kansas Health Foundation to create “Color-filled Breastfeeding: Clinical Lactation Training Program.” This lactation consultant clinical training program will offer individuals an opportunity to receive hands-on clinical lactation experience. Students will be paired with an experienced mentor at local hospitals, health departments, and other settings in Kansas. Sapphire Garcia-Lies, Program Coordinator, has already begun recruiting clinical sites and students for the program.

Color-filled Breastfeeding is open to all Kansans. To ensure families receive culturally congruent lactation care, scholarships will be provided to Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) students. This new program reflects the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition’s commitment to addressing inequities in breastfeeding rates. Breastfeeding rates in Kansas are on the rise. Yet, a “rising tide” does not raise all boats. Inequities persist between races and ethnicities. Kansas birth certificate data for the period of 2017-2019 shows breastfeeding initiation rates for Black families was 8.6% lower than the state average.

Boosting breastfeeding among Black families is especially significant in Kansas, where recent data from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment indicated that Black infants are more than twice as likely to die in infancy than their white neighbors. Having access to culturally congruent lactation care to help families start and continue breastfeeding is an important tool to combat these deaths because breastfeeding has profound long-term health benefits for infants and can increase the odds that they will live to see their first birthday.

“Nearly 90% of families in Kansas choose to breastfeed,” said Stephanne Rupnicki, Chair of the KBC Board of Directors. “Yet too many families struggle to find breastfeeding support near them and from someone who looks like them. This new program will address that.”

Color-Filled Breastfeeding will increase the number of lactation consultants in Kansas, specifically the number of BIPOC consultants. With increase access to lactation care, more Kansans will be able to reach their breastfeeding goals.

ABOUT THE KANSAS BREASTFEEDING COALITION

The Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition (KBC) is a state-wide nonprofit organization. With a mission to improve the health and well-being of Kansans by working collaboratively to promote, protect and support breastfeeding, KBC envisions a state where breastfeeding is normal and supported. To achieve this, KBC focuses its work on improving policies, systems and environments to remove barriers to breastfeeding. Visit ksbreastfeeding.org to learn more.

ABOUT THE KANSAS HEALTH FOUNDATION

The Kansas Health Foundation is based in Wichita, but statewide in its focus. With a mission to improve the health of all Kansans, KHF envisions a culture in which every Kansan can make healthy choices where they live, work and play. During the past 35 years, KHF has provided more than $600 million in grants to improve health in Kansas communities. Visit kansashealth.org to learn more.

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If you’d like more information about this topic or would like to schedule an interview, contact Sapphire Garcia-Lies at (316) 500-0629 or email info@ksbreastfeeding.org.

**Mission** To improve the health and well-being of Kansans by working collaboratively to promote, protect and support breastfeeding.

**Vision** Breastfeeding is normal and supported throughout Kansas.