



2023 Rural Health Journalism Workshop

**THE 5 MOST URGENT  
CONVERSATIONS  
ABOUT RURAL HEALTH**

KANSAS CITY, MO | AUGUST 24



Association of Health Care Journalists  
Center for Excellence in Health Care Journalism



# WELCOME TO KANSAS CITY!



## Welcome to K.C. for a deep dive into health in rural America

We're excited you're here for the 14th Rural Health Journalism Workshop, sponsored by the Association of Health Care Journalists and the Center for Excellence in Health Care Journalism. We hold these workshops annually because the 46 million Americans who live in rural areas face unique and pressing health challenges that often don't get the attention they deserve.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, rural Americans are more likely to die of heart disease, cancer and stroke than city dwellers. They have more fatal motor vehicle crashes and more fatal opioid overdoses. They often must travel great distances to find health care. Compared with people in urban areas, rural residents are less likely to have health insurance, more likely to be impoverished, and often live in "news deserts" where they have limited access to news about their own communities. That's why we're using the word "urgent" in the title of this year's workshop. We'll be talking about matters that can't wait — the environment's effects on health, the role of harm reduction in fighting overdoses, mental health care in the heartland, the crisis in maternal health and access to health information. I'm sure you will leave with a deeper understanding of how these issues affect people in rural areas, along with an armload of ideas on how to cover them.

**Thanks to the Sunflower Foundation, the Health Forward Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Commonwealth Fund for supporting the workshop here in Kansas City. And thanks to you for taking the time to join us for these vital conversations.**

**Felice J. Freyer**  
President

**Kelsey Ryan**  
Executive Director

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## Handouts

Some of our panelists will have tip sheets, resource lists or other handouts available during the workshop. These materials will also be available — along with visual presentations — at [healthjournalism.org](http://healthjournalism.org) shortly after the workshop.

## Workshop Evaluations

After the workshop, we will send a link to an online evaluation form. We ask that you complete this form to help us continue to improve our programs.

**Wi-Fi Network:** Hyatt Meeting

**Password:** HotelKC!

We encourage attendees who are posting social media updates to use **#AHCJRural**.

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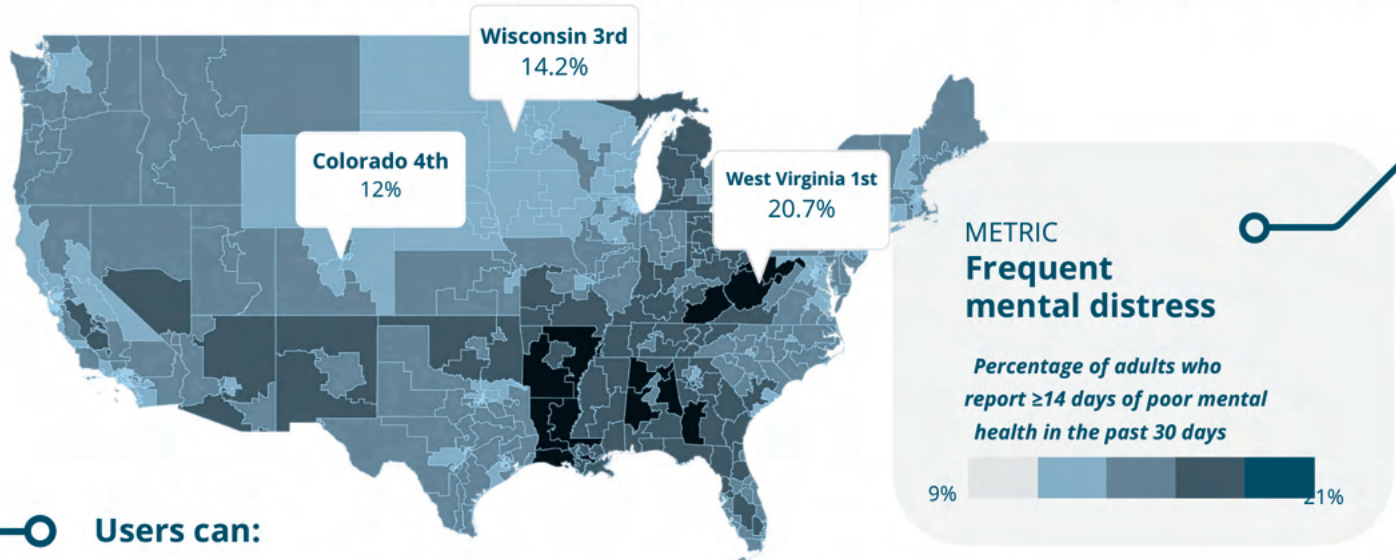




## New Online Tool Provides Health Snapshots of All 435 U.S. Congressional Districts

The Congressional District Health Dashboard developed by researchers at NYU Grossman School of Medicine, in partnership with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, will help policymakers, advocates, journalists, and others dig into congressional district-level data, identify priorities, and drive action.

### Comparing Mental Distress Across Congressional Districts



#### Users can:



Explore rigorous, non-partisan data on health, education, poverty, and more by congressional district



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# SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Thursday, August 24, 2023

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**7-8:15 a.m.**

Breakfast

**8:30-9:30 a.m.**

Rural America: Demographics, innovation, and your next big story

**9:30-10:30 a.m.**

Health on the front line of environmental change

**10:45-11:45 a.m.**

How rural harm reduction fits into the fight against overdose

**12:20-1 p.m.**

Cultivating community health: The Thrive Allen County experience

**1:15-2:15 p.m.**

Rural mental health care: Reaching cultural competency

**2:30-3:30 p.m.**

Finding a maternal health solution for rural America

**3:30-4:45 p.m.**

How health care journalism can reach news deserts



## AUGUST 24 PROGRAM

**7-8:15 a.m., Starlight Ballroom, pre-function**  
**Breakfast available**

**8:30-9:30 a.m., Starlight Ballroom**

### **Welcome and Introductions**

#### **Rural America: Demographics, innovation, and your next big story**

This presentation will provide an overview of rural demographics and health resources in rural communities. It will also highlight issues that rural communities face in assuring access to health services including health care, public health, and behavioral health with a focus on innovative solutions. The session will conclude with resources that provide updated mortality and morbidity data stratified by rural and non-rural counties and connections to rural program implementers who have demonstrated success.

- Speaker: Alana Knudson, senior fellow, Public Health Research Department, NORC, University of Chicago; director, NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis

**9:30-10:30 a.m., Starlight Ballroom**

#### **Health on the front line of environmental change**

Climate change is humanity's most pressing health threat, according to the World Health Organization. Wildfire smoke hazards, compromised water quality and the mounting burden of disease are among the unprecedented environmental changes that are already resulting in urgent threats to human well-being, vulnerable communities and health care resilience. Panelists will discuss these connections, policies and programs to mitigate the worst impacts — and talk about story ideas.

- Moderator: Rachel Cohen, reporter, Boise State Public Radio
- Kristina Kintziger, environmental and disaster epidemiologist
- Lisa Patel, executive director, Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health; clinical associate professor, Stanford Medicine Children's Health
- Antonio Tovar, senior policy associate, National Family Farm Coalition

**10:45 a.m.-11:45 p.m., Starlight Ballroom**

#### **How rural harm reduction fits into the fight against overdose**

Despite their public health success, harm reduction programs often find themselves in political crosshairs, largely driven by misconceptions about their impact on community safety. That's led to some states, including many that are mostly rural, to enact laws that restrict health officials from implementing them effectively. These decisions have many negative health consequences, and the CDC has attributed some HIV outbreaks in these states to these specific laws. With perspectives from a former health official, a community program director and a public health journalist, this panel will focus on the impact harm reduction can have in rural places and obstacles that can hinder these efforts. We'll talk about how the initiatives not only prevent disease transmission but also offer unique ways to build trust with people in rural communities.

- Moderator: Allen Siegler, public health reporter, Mountain State Spotlight
- Maggie Seldeen, founder, executive director, High Rockies Harm Reduction
- Cathy Slemper, State Health Officer, West Virginia





**12:20-1 p.m., Starlight Ballroom**

**Cultivating community health:  
The Thrive Allen County experience**

In 2005, in Southeast Kansas, 48% of residents had no dental insurance; 27% hadn't seen a dentist in the past two years, and 66% were overweight or obese, according to data at the time. Allen County, less than two hours south and slightly west of Kansas City, was losing 1% of its population each year.

People were frustrated, watching their community diminish. It was hard to find a doctor, let alone a dentist. Young people were moving away and not returning. Something had to be done.

The turnaround is called Thrive Allen County, an organization that — with the help of grant funding — built community will to improve the health and wellness of its residents. It has won awards and recognitions and has become a model for other rural communities. But what has it really been like to facilitate a



*Lisse Regehr*

community's focus on a big idea for better health and a more promising future? What does a holistic approach to rural community health entail?

Thrive's President and CEO Lisse Regehr will tell the story and talk about the surprises and hard lessons learned, followed by a Q&A moderated by AHCJ Director of Education and Content Katherine Reed.



*The Scout, Penn Valley Park  
Photo: Visit KC*



## PROGRAM

**1:15 - 2:15 p.m., Starlight Ballroom**

### **Rural mental health care: Reaching cultural competency**

The impact of having your livelihood linked to the whims of weather patterns, market forces outside your control and your own physical vulnerabilities has been accurately portrayed by media as often as it has been misrepresented; romanticized to a fault in song, literature and reporting by journalists not from those communities. People living in rural communities can have high suicide rates, substance use disorder, depression and other challenges. Addressing them respectfully and with high cultural competency is crucial. We'll hear from the director of behavioral health for a network of medical clinics serving the immigrant and refugee-rich areas of Western Kansas; a bilingual licensed clinical addiction counselor; a clinical psychologist with experience in telemental health in Wyoming and North Dakota; and a director within a national network of innovative initiatives, including a crisis support helpline for agricultural communities in six states.

- Moderator: Mary Sanchez, senior reporter, PBS Kansas City; syndicated columnist, Tribune Content Agency
- Samuel Goetschius, medication-assisted treatment director, Genesis Family Health
- Tara Haskins, total farmer health director and mental health lead, AgriSafe
- Brenda Hernandez, licensed master's social worker and licensed master's addiction
- Tess Kilwein, PSYPACT clinical psychologist, telemental health practice

**2:30 - 3:30 p.m., Starlight Ballroom**

### **Finding a maternal health solution for rural America**

Maternal mortality rates are at historic highs. Yet, more than half of rural counties in the United States lack obstetrics services. The closing of obstetrics units and practices disproportionately affects communities with more people of color, especially Black residents, and in states with more limited Medicaid services. This panel, including a health policy researcher, a health system leader and national journalists who have covered the inequities, will help you sort through the salient facts and introduce you to local efforts to address the challenge. This session will prepare you to tackle tough stories that can also provide hope.

- Moderator: Sarah Jane Tribble, chief rural health correspondent, KFF Health News
- Caitlin Carroll, assistant professor, Division of Health Policy and Management, University of Minnesota
- Erin Coppenbarger, Manager, Maternal & Infant Health Initiatives, March of Dimes
- Margo Snipe, national health reporter, Capital B
- Karen White, CEO, Missouri Highlands Health Care





**3:30 - 4:45 p.m., Starlight Ballroom**

## **How health care journalism can reach news deserts**

Many Americans who live in rural and economically depressed areas suffer from health disparities and face barriers to accessing health care. They're also more likely to live in news deserts, which means they lack access to local health journalism while lawmakers, policy experts, and health care providers who could make a difference in rural health are lacking information about these communities. This panel will discuss topics such as the status of journalism in rural America, how rural residents receive health-related news, and exciting ways health care journalists are reaching news deserts. Hear from an expert on rural journalism, a South Dakota-based national rural health reporter and a journalist covering a rural region of Texas.

- Moderator: Arielle Zions, rural health reporter, KFF Health News
- Al Cross, publisher, Kentucky Health News
- Jayme Lozano Carver, reporter, Texas Tribune, Lubbock

**4:45-5 p.m., Starlight Ballroom**

## **Discussion and wrapup**



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## SPEAKER BIOS

**Caitlin Carroll, Ph.D.**, is an assistant professor in the Division of Health Policy and Management at the University of Minnesota. Her research focuses on rural health care markets, including hospital closures, rural maternity care, payment policy for rural hospitals, and technology adoption patterns among rural physician practices. Prior to joining the University of Minnesota, Carroll worked as a research associate at the Urban Institute and completed her doctorate at Harvard University.

**Rachel Cohen** is a reporter at Boise State Public Radio. She covers south-central Idaho for the station and also focuses on health, environmental and agricultural reporting. She got her start in public radio through an internship on NPR's Science Desk and later produced interviews for "All Things Considered" at New Hampshire Public Radio. She was the recipient of a 2022-2023 Science-Health-Environment fellowship, sponsored by AHCJ, the Society for Environmental Journalists and the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing.

**Erin Copenbarger, M.S., R.D., L.D.**, is a registered dietitian originally from Omaha, Neb. She received a bachelor's degree in nutrition, exercise, health sciences and dietetics from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, completed her dietetic internship at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, and received a master's in nutrition from the University of Central Arkansas. Copenbarger developed a passion for maternal/infant health through providing nutrition education to pregnant and breastfeeding women. She now serves as the maternal and infant health initiatives manager at March of Dimes in St. Louis where she advocates for health equity for all Missourians.

**Al Cross** is publisher of Kentucky Health News, an independent digital publication funded by the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky. He is also director emeritus of the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues and extension professor of journalism at the University of Kentucky. Cross won a share of the Courier-Journal's 1989 Pulitzer Prize for coverage of the nation's deadliest bus crash and was national president of the Society of Professional Journalists from 2001 to 2002. He still writes a regular political column for the Courier-Journal and lives in the state capital of Frankfort.

**Samuel Goetschius, M.S.N.**, is the medication assisted treatment director at Genesis Family Health in Garden City, Kan., where he has practiced since 2015. Goetschius graduated from Pittsburg State University with a master's degree in nursing in 2014 with an emphasis in rural health and nursing education. He obtained his postgraduate certification in psychiatric mental health nursing practice from Washburn State University. Goetschius specializes in psychiatric care and has special interest in ADHD treatment, addiction and substance use.

**Tara Haskins, D.N.P., M.S.N.**, is the total farmer health director and mental health lead for AgriSafe. She has 36 years of registered nursing experience with more than 17 years in health care education. She holds a master's degree in psychiatric mental health nursing from the University of Texas at Arlington in the nurse practitioner track and a doctorate in nursing practice in forensics from the University of Tennessee at Memphis. Haskins is a board-certified advanced holistic nurse and a 2018 National Rural Health Association Fellow. She regularly advocates in



rural health care delivery as a National Rural Health Association member.

**Brenda Hernandez, LMSW, LMAC, KCGC-I**, holds a degree in sociology from Fort Hays State University with a certification in addiction counseling and a master's in social work from the University of Kansas. She previously worked as a licensed addiction counselor in Dodge City, Kan., and is now practicing as a licensed master social worker, licensed master addiction counselor, and is the only bilingual gambling addiction counselor in southwest Kansas. Hernandez also provides services with Genesis Family Health as a school-based therapist.

**Jayme Lozano Carver** is The Texas Tribune's Lubbock-based reporter, covering the South Plains and Panhandle through a partnership with Report for America. Carver started her professional career at the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal and Amarillo Globe-News in 2017. She later joined Texas Tech Public Media, Lubbock's NPR station, in 2021, where she spearheaded a three-part series studying rural hospital closures in Texas called: "Rural Healthcare: The Other Texas Drought." Carver was born and raised in the South Plains area and has covered a broad range of topics including rural issues, water availability, climate change, agriculture, mental health, broadband and health care access.

**Tess M. Kilwein, Ph.D.**, is a board-certified PSYPACT clinical psychologist who operates a telemental health practice. They obtained their doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of Wyoming and have lived and practiced in both rural North Dakota and Wyoming. Kilwein just finished their term as Wyoming's representative on the American Psychological Association's Council of Representatives and serves on the

Association's Committee on Rural Health. They are passionate about ensuring access to affirming and culturally competent telemental health services.

**Kristina Kintziger, Ph.D., M.P.H.**, is an environmental and disaster epidemiologist with experience in both academia and public health practice. Her general research area focuses on the application of advanced and interdisciplinary methods to improve public health practice in environmental and disaster epidemiology. More specifically, Kintziger is interested in the impacts of weather and climate change on morbidity, mortality, and other public health outcomes.

**Alana Knudson, Ph.D.**, is a senior fellow in the Public Health Research Department at NORC at the University of Chicago and is the director of the NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis. She has more than 25 years of experience leading health research studies, evaluating program effectiveness, and translating findings into practice. Knudson's work is funded by federal agencies and private foundations. Her passion is to make a meaningful difference in the health and well-being of rural residents and other underserved populations.

**Lisa Patel M.D., M.E.Sc.**, is the executive director of the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health and is a clinical associate professor at Stanford Medicine Children's Health where she cares for children, newborns and premature infants. In her work with the Consortium, Patel has organized a movement of health professionals across the country who understand climate change to be a profound public health issue. Together, they advocate for bold policy solutions to climate change on the local, state and federal levels.



## SPEAKER BIOS

**Katherine Reed** is AHCJ's director of education and content. She was a professor of practice in the Missouri School of Journalism for 17 years and a health and public safety editor at the Columbia Missourian — the newsroom lab for students learning print and digital journalism. She also designed and taught a course on covering trauma, a course for STEM field and journalism students on improving science communication to the public, and investigative reporting. She was a fellow of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma and is a longtime member of AHCJ. Reed has published on the “teaching hospital” model of journalism education, trauma reporting, and more ethical and responsible coverage of firearm violence and mass shootings.

**Lisse Regehr** is the president and CEO of Thrive Allen County, where she works to improve quality of life and economic conditions throughout rural Kansas. Under Regehr's leadership, Thrive has implemented a long list of ambitious projects, including: expanding Allen County's trails, forming public and safety net transportation, creating a nationally replicated bike-share program, greatly reducing the uninsured rate, and launching statewide health care programs. Regehr also co-initiated Thrive Kansas, an organization devoted to building better living conditions and rural revitalization within Kansas. In recent years, Regehr has overseen the administration of \$7.8 million in SPARK and ARPA funds for Allen County.

**Kelsey Ryan** is executive director of the Association of Health Care Journalists. She was founder and publisher of The Beacon, a nonprofit news network with newsrooms in Kansas City and Wichita. Ryan started her career covering the EF-5 tornado at The Joplin (Missouri) Globe, and worked at The Wichita (Kansas) Eagle covering health care,

government and investigations. She later went on to work at The Kansas City Star as part of the investigative team that was a 2018 Pulitzer finalist in the public service category. She's a former Institute for Nonprofit News board member.

**Mary Sanchez** is a senior reporter for PBS Kansas City and a syndicated columnist with Tribune Content Agency. Previously, Sanchez worked at The Kansas City Star, where she was a metro columnist, a member of the editorial board and spent years reporting on race, class, social and criminal justice, immigration and educational issues. She is a mentor with Report for America, pairing with early career journalists as they enter the profession. Sanchez is a native of Kansas City and has also lived in Mexico, the country of her father's birth.

**Maggie Seldeen** is the founder and executive director of High Rockies Harm Reduction, an organization that provides supplies, services and education for people who use drugs and their loved ones in rural Colorado. Seldeen was raised in rural Colorado, where she lost her mother to an overdose. She's experienced the rising rates of Hepatitis C, HIV and overdoses firsthand, and she approaches harm reduction as a peer. Seldeen has trained hundreds of people all over the country on how to use naloxone and other strategies for abating the opioid epidemic.

**Allen Siegler, M.P.H.**, is the public health reporter for Mountain State Spotlight, a nonprofit newsroom in West Virginia. Siegler has reported on a wide range of population health topics impacting the state, including substance use disorder, medical transportation and the foster care system. He has a master's degree in public health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



**Cathy Slemp, M.D., M.P.H.**, was West Virginia's State Health Officer from 2002 to 2011 and from 2018 to 2020. Slemp was part of guiding the state's response to its injection drug use crisis, including HIV outbreaks in Huntington and Charleston, West Virginia's two largest cities. When state legislators passed a bill in 2021 that restricted needle exchange programs, Slemp filed a brief in support of an ACLU lawsuit against it. Most recently, Slemp helped launch the West Virginia Hope in Action Alliance, a statewide coalition to foster collaboration, coordination and innovation in addressing substance use and its effects.

**Margo Snipe** is a national health reporter for Capital B. She covers critical issues affecting the mental and physical health of Black Americans, investigates how racial bias in medicine impacts our lives, and identifies inequities in the American health care system. Snipe won SPJ Florida's Outstanding New Journalist award in 2022 for her health equity reporting at the Tampa Bay Times. Snipe graduated cum laude from Georgetown University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and was captain of the varsity women's volleyball team.

**Antonio Tovar, Ph.D.**, is the senior policy associate for the National Family Farm Coalition, a 35-year-old organization representing more than 30 farmer, rancher and fisherfolk grassroots groups across the country. The Coalition was also the first member of La Vía Campesina, the international peasant movement, in North America. As a medical anthropologist for two decades, Tovar studied the health and safety of farmworkers for the Farmworker Association of Florida, public state universities, and the Florida Department of Health. Tovar is an Interdisciplinary Research

Leaders fellow at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Board Chair-Elect of the Community-Campus Partnership for Health. He has over 30 academic publications.

**Sarah Jane Tribble** is the chief rural health correspondent for KFF Health News. Previously, she produced award-winning coverage on prescription drug prices and the rare-disease drug industry. Tribble also covered health care for NPR and PBS affiliates in Cleveland, Ohio, and has spent more than a decade as a staff writer for newspapers across the country. Her work appears in The Washington Post and USA Today, and she is a regular contributor to NPR's "Morning Edition" and "All Things Considered."



*Neptune Fountain, Country Club Plaza  
Photo: Visit KC*



## SPEAKER BIOS

**Karen White, M.Acc.**, is the CEO of Missouri Highlands Health Care. She joined the organization in 2009 as the chief financial officer, stepping into the role of CEO in 2014. During this time, White has led the organization through remarkable transitions and growth. Her voice is often heard on matters of rural health and health equity issues, expounding on her belief that zip codes should not dictate health and wellness. White, a certified public accountant, earned her master's in accountancy from Missouri State University in 2007. She spent more than a decade with the Missouri Department of Social Services and has worked in banking, retail, construction, timber and management.

Away from work, she enjoys time with her daughter, Maive, on their small acreage just outside of Eminence, Mo.

**Arielle Zionts** is a rural health reporter at KFF Health News based in Rapid City, S.D. She strives to increase awareness of and media coverage about health care challenges in rural America and their possible solutions. Zionts' reporting focuses on South Dakota and its surrounding states and tribal nations. Previously, Zionts worked at South Dakota Public Broadcasting, the Rapid City Journal, and the Nogales International on the border of Arizona and Mexico.

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