

LIMITED-SCOPE AUDIT PROPOSAL

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment: Evaluating Disease Intervention Specialist Positions and Sexually Transmitted Infection Case Rate Trends

SOURCE

This audit proposal was requested by Representative Tom Burroughs.

BACKGROUND

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) funds a number of disease intervention specialists across the state whose job is to help identify and prevent outbreaks of sexually transmitted infections (STI), such as gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, and HIV. Most intervention specialists are KDHE employees, though KDHE also provided grant funding for several specialists employed by the Wyandotte County Health Department until September 2017. Intervention specialists receive specialized training from the U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Specialists meet with patients who have contracted an STI, and to prevent the spread of these infections, they try to determine how the patient got the infection, educate them on how to treat it, and to determine who else might have been exposed.

A November 2015 article in the Wichita Eagle highlighted spikes in sexually transmitted infections in Kansas and nationwide. In that article, officials from the CDC noted that 2014 national chlamydia rates were some of the highest ever. This was consistent with annual data compiled by KDHE for Kansas, which shows steady increases in sexually transmitted infection rates for chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis since 2013.

Legislators have expressed concern that KDHE might not be providing adequate funding for disease intervention specialists given the upward trend in sexually transmitted infection rates in recent years.

AUDIT OBJECTIVES AND TENTATIVE METHODOLOGY

The audit objectives listed below represent the questions that we would answer through our audit work. The proposed steps for each objective are intended to convey the type of work we would do, but are subject to change as we learn more about the audit issues and are able to refine our methodology.

Objective 1: How has the number of disease intervention specialists funded by the Department of Health and Environment compared to the number of sexually transmitted infection cases in recent years? Our tentative methodology would include the following:

- Review data on sexually transmitted infection (STI) cases from KDHE to identify the trends in STI rates over the past five years. To the extent possible, we would evaluate STI case rates statewide, by region, and by county.

- Work with KDHE officials to determine how many disease intervention specialist positions the agency has funded over the past five years. This would include both specialists employed directly by KDHE and those employed through grants like the one previously provided to the Wyandotte County Health Department.
- Determine whether the number of positions tracks with the case rates, and if not, follow up with KDHE staff to understand why not.

ESTIMATED RESOURCES

We estimate this audit would require **100 staff hours** to complete.