

YWCA Northeast Kansas is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

YWCA ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

2024 Goals and Priorities

Healthcare

YWCA Northeast Kansas is committed to supporting access to affordable, sustainable, and quality health care for women, children, people of color, and survivors of gender-based violence.

The YWCA Northeast Kansas Advocacy Committee will:

- ☒ Partner with providers and organizations that effectively contribute to advancing health equity, including Medicaid expansion.
- ☒ Advocate for policies that:
 - o Protect and expand access, and provide comprehensive, evidence-based education for contraception and abortion.
 - o Safeguard reproductive rights and reject restrictions on the right to access safe abortion services.
 - o Address maternal health disparities through increased access to prenatal care, comprehensive maternal health education, and culturally sensitive care for pregnant individuals.
 - o Expand healthcare coverage, reduce the coverage gap, and support initiatives that ensure access to quality healthcare services for all.
 - o Promote mental health parity and increase affordability and accessibility of mental health services.

Economic Security

YWCA Northeast Kansas recognizes that economic security is a key component of women's empowerment and ability to thrive in our community. We know that when women are economically independent and secure, they increase investments in themselves, their families, and the whole community, leading to personal economic success and a more stable society.

According to the U.S. State Department, "Economic security is the ability to consistently meet essential needs for oneself and one's family through quality jobs and dignified, decent work. To be economically secure means having a stable income or enough resources to support an adequate standard of living now, for the foreseeable future, and during times of economic crises. Across the world, women are far less likely to be economically secure than men."

The YWCA Northeast Kansas Advocacy Committee will:

- Partner with organizations on efforts to increase opportunities for women, especially women of color, to achieve economic security through fair and equal wages, and support themselves and their families in a safe, stable community.
- Advocate for policies that:
 - Create and maintain equal access to livable wages.
 - Create safe and inclusive work environments, free from discrimination and harassment.
 - Increase access to quality, affordable childcare.
 - Create fair paid leave policies.
 - Increase opportunities for training and development for professional advancement.
 - Reduce and prevent violence, including gun violence.
 - Support care workers and the care industry, a majority of which are women.
 - Protect and increase equal access to quality education, including early childhood education, and oppose efforts that attack the integrity of public education.
 - Support programs for safe and affordable housing.
 - Provide equitable regulation of predatory financial practices, such as payday lending.

Gender-Based Violence

Women and girls of all ages, income levels, racial and ethnic communities, sexual orientations, gender identities, and religious affiliations continue to experience violence in the form of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and trafficking. As the largest network of domestic and sexual violence service providers in the United States, YWCA works for practical solutions to protect survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and eradicate all forms of gender-based violence.

The YWCA Northeast Kansas Advocacy Committee will:

- Partner with local, state, and national partners in our network of organizations advocating for survivors and providing services to meet the needs of survivors in our communities.
- Continue to develop a local Shear Haven initiative in partnership with YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee and local salon professional leaders:
 - Train local salon professionals.
 - Increase awareness and provide resources at point-of-contact for survivors who may not feel comfortable coming directly to YWCA.
 - Strengthen partnerships with sister YWCAs.

- Advocate for Domestic Violence Prevention and Awareness training to be a professional licensure requirement adopted at the training and/or policy levels throughout Kansas.
- Advocate for policies that:
 - Reauthorize the federal grants that fund these crucial services, including reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA).
 - Protect and increase the cap on the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA).

Racial Justice

Centuries of racism in the U.S have caused unfair policies in housing, income, healthcare, education, public safety and justice, transportation, and food access that prevent people of color from being healthy - including our own community. These centuries-old policies work negatively and together in ways that benefit the physical and mental health of white people over the physical and mental health of people of color.

Confronting racism and racial inequities across this range of policies requires a broad and coordinated public health response. We recognize and acknowledge the intersection of race and gender identities and will work to ensure inclusivity and accessibility.

The YWCA Northeast Kansas Advocacy Committee will:

- Advocate for policies that:
 - Advance equity, safety, and racial justice for women and girls of color across justice, education, health, and other systems with documented racial disparities by **recognizing racism as a public health crisis in our community.**
- Continue to work with the Shawnee County Racial Equity Impact Analysis Group (REIAG) committee to advance this initiative among local employers and at the City and County government level in pursuit of the following:
 - Topeka City Council and Commissioners of Shawnee County publicly asserts that racism is a public health crisis in Topeka/Shawnee County affecting all members of our City/County and all of Kansas; and
 - Topeka and Shawnee County departments should prevent biased policy decision-making and implementation through protocols that require equity analysis through staff training on equity, bias, and cultural sensitivity; and
 - Topeka/Shawnee County elected officials and departments to continue, with urgency, the review of policies and procedures for the purposes of eradicating implicit and explicit racial bias and develop instead policies and procedures that build racial equity; and

- Topeka/Shawnee County departments should ensure equal and unbiased law enforcement and criminal justice through policies on policing practices, adequate accountability measures instilled in law enforcement contracts, through training, and publishing data on arrests and use of force for public view. Data on sentencing recommendations by the District Attorney's office should be kept and published; and
- Topeka/Shawnee County should always promote policies and grant funding opportunities, both in procurement and in distribution, that prioritize the health of all people, especially people of color, and address at least one area of the social determinants of health.

Voting

The right to vote is central to the mission of YWCA, and women and girls are disproportionately affected by policies that make it more difficult to vote or actively seek to suppress the vote.

The YWCA Northeast Kansas Advocacy Committee will:

- Collaborate with local and state partner organizations on efforts to promote free and fair elections, including supporting events for candidates and voters to participate in on-line and in-person forums.
- Advocate for policies that:
 - Increase access to voting, including increased days of early voting, more convenient locations for early voting, and assistance with voter registration.
 - Create fair apportionment and redistricting.
 - Promote open and transparent government at all levels.
 - Maintain the integrity of elections and oppose efforts to inject divisiveness, fear, and partisanship in local elections.

When we say “women and girls”: YWCA programs, services, and advocacy efforts center marginalized genders including women, women-identifying individuals, and non-binary and gender non-conforming people who are comfortable in a space that centers the experiences of women.