



ANNUAL REPORT

"EXCELLENCE IN ACTION"

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



The University of Kentucky College of Medicine's Center of Excellence in Rural Health (UK CERH) is pleased to present its annual report for 2024. This report highlights the reach of our community service and our academic programs that prepare graduates for a successful career. Seventy-three Medical Laboratory Scientists (MLS) have graduated since 2013, filling an identified need in medical laboratories across rural Kentucky. The Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program has graduated 241 students since 2010, and The East Kentucky Family Medical Residency program has graduated 109 physicians the majority of whom have made rural a priority since 1992 and are filling an urgent workforce need in quality healthcare across the Commonwealth.

Research activities included nine focus areas that developed innovative solutions and navigated through complex challenges, with publications that illustrate our journey and commitment to excellence, presentations to share our great work with others who have a vested interest in rural research, and reports that highlight invaluable information and commitment to excellence in 2024 that total 42 collectively.

Four pathway programs (CARAT-TOP, Kentucky Homeplace Students Striving Toward Better Health in Self and Community, and Healthy WAY) demonstrate our passion for outreach and community engagement and our commitment to rural Kentucky through our implementation of these various programs designed to equip youth with the essential training and skills needed to improve the health of rural Kentuckians. Additionally, the Center planned and hosted professional conferences, summits, workshops, and webinars throughout 2024, which were vital in keeping the rural workforce and communities informed about the latest and most important information available.

Kentucky Homeplace Community Health Workers (CHWs) provided 62,192 services for 5,563 clients. CHWs logged 19,384.02 hours on care coordination activities with a value of \$461,533.52. The amount of medication accessed was \$21,494,474 and other service values (not medications) accessed at \$2,345,570.26 for a combined total of \$24,494,447.49. The UK CERH-Kentucky Homeplace CHW training team trained 210 new CHWs across the state.

At the close of 2024, Dr. Frances Feltner, UK CERH Director, retired with many years of service. Feltner was the director of Kentucky Homeplace during the early years of the program and was the director of the center from 2011 through 2024. During this time, she remained a steadfast champion of all things rural and of those who were underserved. Her efforts and many years of dedication are truly appreciated. She will be missed greatly but not forgotten. The staff of the UK CERH remain committed to carrying on Dr. Feltner's legacy and commitment to the community. Our core values, mission, and vision of the UK CERH remain steadfast as we strive to enhance the health and well-being of rural Kentuckians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Mace Baker".

Interim Director

INTRODUCTION

The UK Center of Excellence in Rural Health serves as the federally designated Kentucky Office of Rural Health. Together, we provide service, education, workforce, health disparities research, outreach, and community engagement. Our innovative “Excellence in Action Team” works with local, state, and national partnerships to address rural health challenges and opportunities to improve the health and well-being of the Commonwealth.

Values:

- Integrity
- Respect
- Sense of Community
- Shared Experience
- Cultural Humility

Mission:

Improve the health and well-being of rural Kentuckians.

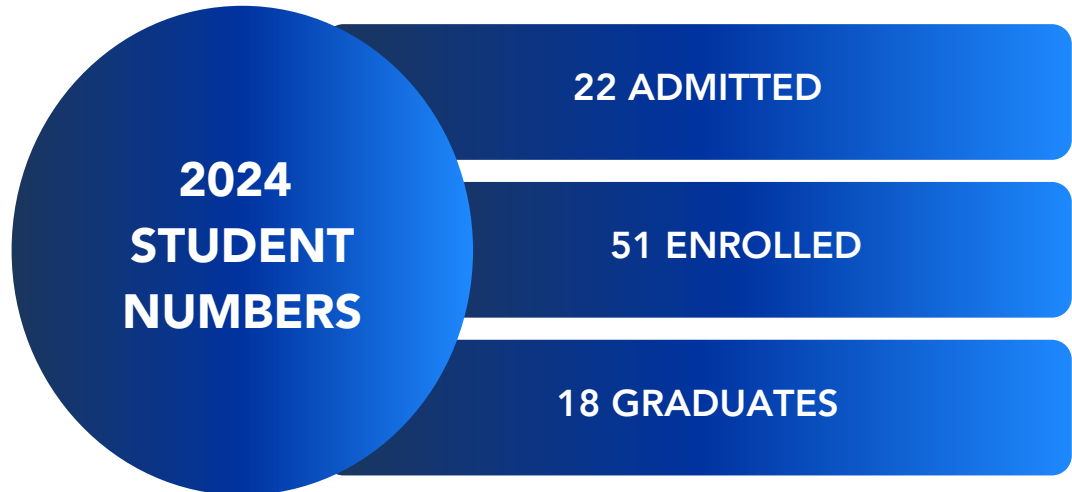
Vision:

A Healthier Kentucky



EDUCATION

The Center's academic offerings are focused on curbing health profession shortages within rural Kentucky. Regional workforce analyses are conducted periodically to project the need to add or change academic offerings to meet market demands.



ACADEMIC PROGRAMS



**Bachelor of Health Sciences
with a major in Medical
Laboratory Science**
73 graduates since 2013

**Doctor of Physical
Therapy**
241 graduates since 2010



**East Kentucky Family Medical
Residency**
109 graduates since 1992



PATHWAY PROGRAMS

COORDINATING AND ASSISTING THE REUSE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY: TOGETHER ONE PRIORITY



An 8-week program that brings together students, of all abilities, from local high schools and the community to develop skills in assessing community accessibility, refurbishing used medical equipment, adapting toys and other assistive technology devices, prototyping new parts, and developing strategies for engaging community stakeholders (leaders, businesses, faith communities, local media, etc.).



The program educates students from multiple levels (high school, community college, and university) about inclusion and accessibility through the process of adapting toys. Toys become part of a lending library for the community.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

Pre-employment transition services, better known as Pre-ETS, is a collaborative effort between the Education and Workforce Cabinet's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and Kentucky Educational Institutions, that trains students with disabilities, ages 14-21. Pre-ETS is committed to addressing the employment requirements of students with disabilities.

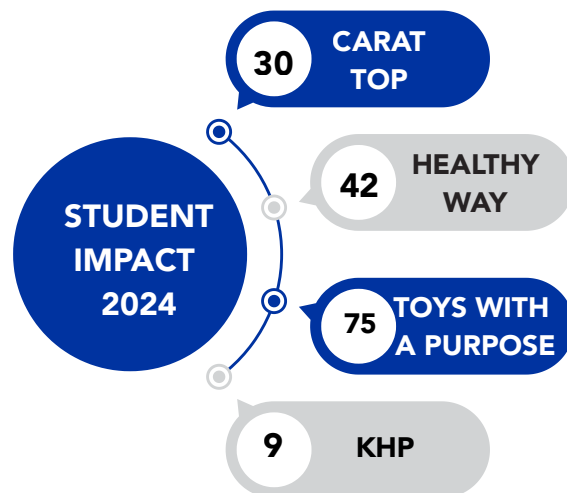


Students Striving Toward Better Health in Self and Community Initiative

A partnership between UK CERH, United Health Care, and Hazard Community & Technical College, this program is available to Perry County Central and Hazard Independent high school. Students receive dual credit as they complete the Kentucky Homeplace (KHP) CHW curriculum and other requirements to apply to be a certified CHW.



This leadership development and research training program is for rural Kentucky high school students. Students gain skills to identify and develop solutions to health and social issues at the school and community level.



RESEARCH

UK CERH’s dedicated research team of faculty, providers and staff conducts rural health research related to health disparities, health outcomes, health policy, health care delivery systems and workforce needs. Through research efforts in local communities, the UK CERH works to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of health care for rural Kentuckians by addressing health disparities and barriers to access to quality care. Research outcomes are disseminated through publications and presentations to help raise awareness, develop solutions and identify best practices for rural health issues. As an invested stakeholder in the local community, the Center is uniquely positioned to facilitate partnerships between community members and other researchers interested in community-based research in rural areas.



Discover what's Wildly Possible!



EST. 2015

APPALACHIAN RESEARCH DAY

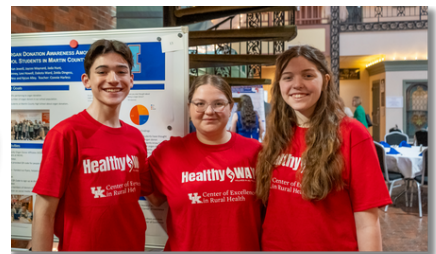
come sit on the porch

UK CERH hosted the 9th annual Appalachian Research Day: Come Sit on the Porch on April 11, 2024 in Paintsville, Kentucky. More than 150 people attended the conference, which featured presentations highlighting research that has occurred in Appalachia Kentucky. Jamie Sturgill, with the UK College of Medicine delivered the keynote address, *“Beyond Basketball: Why We Need Team-based Research to improve Healthcare in Appalachia”*

High school students from across the region presented numerous projects during a shared session of Healthy WAY (Wellness in All Youth), a youth leadership and research development program created by the UK CERH for rural Kentucky high school students.

“Research Opportunities at the Community Level” was presented by panelists Caleb Williams with the UK CERH, along with Mike Brunet from St. Claire Medical Center, and Stacy Standifer, with the UK Center for Appalachian Research in Environmental Science.

The day also included research posters, an art competition for rural high school students, and a health and research fair.



THE BRIDGE MAGAZINE

Kentucky’s Connection to Rural Health is a fully digital platform featuring an annual magazine and a monthly podcast, The Bridge Podcast. Together, they explore rural health issues, highlight innovative programs, and spotlight individuals making a difference across the Commonwealth. The Bridge is made possible in part through federal Primary Care Office (PCO) grant funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).



KENTUCKY RIVER
HEALTH CONSORTIUM

The Kentucky River Health Consortium was established in December 2017 and is comprised of a variety of agencies from the Kentucky River Area Development District counties (Breathitt, Knott, Letcher, Leslie, Lee, Owsley, Perry, and Wolfe). Our goal is to move the healthcare needle in positive direction for our Kentucky River counties.

Workgroups	YOUTH
	SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER
	AGING POPULATION
	FOOD INSECURTIES

Mission: To use our collective expertise and resources to address the health burdens in our eight-county area.

PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCES/COMMUNITY TRAININGS



Kentucky Rural Telehealth Summit

2024 Kentucky Rural Telehealth Summit

This year’s summit took place at the Knicely Conference Center in Bowling Green, KY, with 172 people in attendance. Dr. Bobby Mukkamala, MD, the president-elect of the American Medical Association (AMA), was present to deliver the keynote address titled “Physician Leadership in Shaping the Future of Telehealth.” Additionally, there were sessions focused on billing, coding, and legal and regulatory updates, among other topics, presented by various medical professionals and health systems from across the Commonwealth, all united by a shared commitment to advancing telehealth utilization.



PROGRAMS



ACAT is an assistive technology resource center serving eastern Kentucky and is a part of the Kentucky Assistive Technology Services (KATS) Network. ACAT provides assistive technology (AT) demonstrations and consultation, a short-term AT loan locker, maker space, workforce training, and refurbishment.



KENTUCKY HOMEPLACE 30TH ANNIVERSARY

In 2024, the Kentucky Homeplace Program celebrated its 30th year of helping Kentuckians. The UK Center of Excellence in Rural Health began Kentucky Homeplace as a demonstration project in 1994, in Hazard, Kentucky, to help individuals overcome barriers to health care and address health disparities.



Over the past three decades, the program has grown into a successful and nationally recognized community health worker (CHW) model. As the longest-running CHW program in Kentucky, Kentucky Homeplace has helped more than 200,000 Kentuckians access health and social services they may otherwise have gone without.

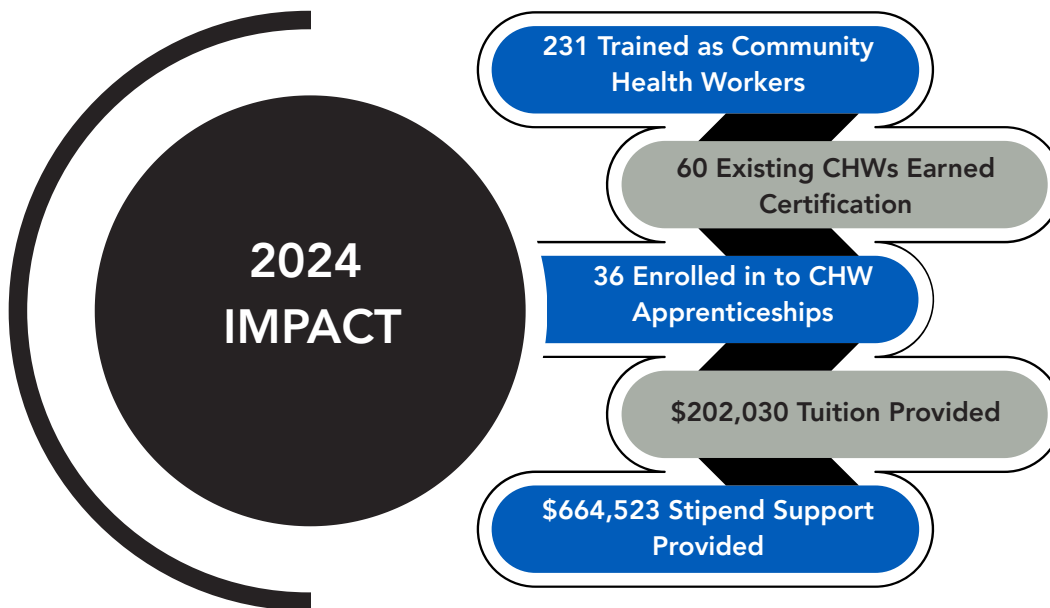
CHW's are skilled in helping members of their communities navigate the health care system, connect with health plans, access free and reduced-cost prescription medications and learn how to better self-manage chronic diseases such as diabetes.

Kentucky Homeplace has provided more than 5.3 million services throughout the program's history. The monetary value of many of these services, combined with free and reduced-cost prescription medications, exceeds \$416 million. Operating with an annual budget from the Kentucky Department of Public Health, Kentucky Homeplace has successfully demonstrated an average return on investment of more than \$11 for every dollar budgeted.

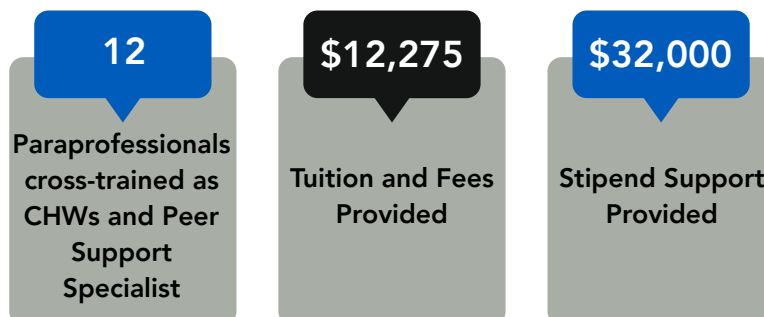
Kentucky Homeplace currently employs 21 certified CHW's who cover 25 counties in eastern Kentucky.



The mission of project ELEVATE is to increase the number of community health workers across the Commonwealth in order to strengthen the healthcare workforce, address workforce shortages, provide access for underserved populations, and address the barriers to social determinants of health in both rural and urban areas.



Resilience In An Opioid-Stricken Environment (RISE) was built to increase the number of peer support specialists and other behavioral health paraprofessionals who are prepared to address the needs of the children and families of individuals impacted by opioid use disorder (OUD) and other substance use disorders (SUD).





Kentucky Office of Rural Health

The UK CERH serves as the federally-designated KORH. KORH serves as a resource for clinicians, students, community leaders, state agencies and legislators for information about rural health issues. KORH works to promote the improvement of rural health care through partnerships with public and private entities statewide and at the regional and national levels.

This program provides a framework for linking small rural communities with local, state, and federal resources while working toward long-term solutions to rural health issues. KORH programs are funded primarily through HRSA's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as well as through other state and federal agencies; including a 3:1 match support from the UK CERH.



Through the following programs, KORH provides technical assistance, coordination of rural health resources, dissemination of rural information and continual community engagement:

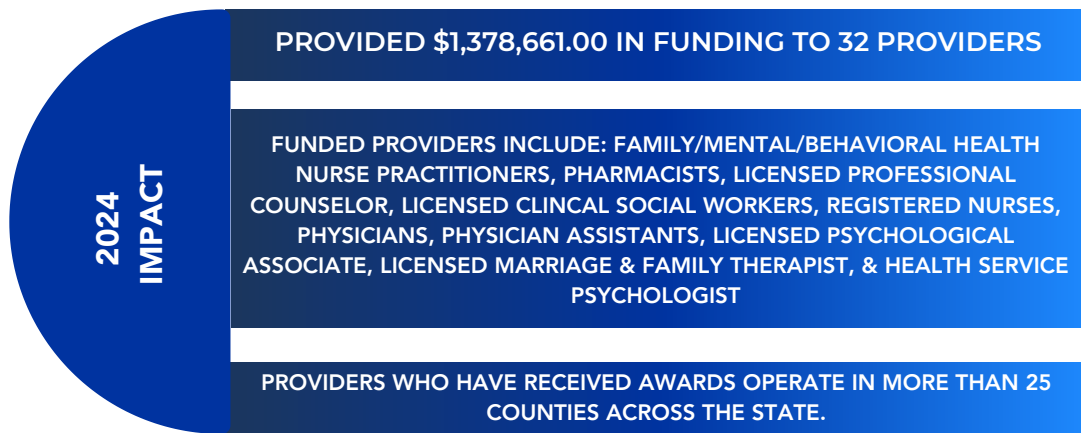
- State Office of Rural Health Program
- Small Rural Hospital Improvement Grant Program
- American Rescue Plan (ARP) COVID-19 Testing and Mitigation Program
- Kentucky State Loan Repayment Program
- Rural Veterans Healthcare Access Program
- Rural Hospital Flexibility Program
- National Health Service Corps Promotion Project
- Kentucky Rural Health Clinic
- Kentucky EMS Leadership Academy
- Elder Wellness Enrichment Initiative



STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAMS

The Healthcare Worker Loan Relief Program of the Commonwealth (HWLRPC)

The HWLRPC, which is administered by the UK CERH in Hazard, was established during the 2022 convening of the Kentucky General Assembly as HB 573 to increase the recruitment and retention of health care professionals to practice in underserved areas of Kentucky. HWLRPC was designed to complement the existing federally funded state loan repayment program by filling in gaps and expanding eligibility to additional medical specialists including ophthalmologists, optometrists and audiologists.



Kentucky State Loan Repayment Program

The Kentucky State Loan Repayment Program (KSLRP) offers financial assistance (loan repayment awards) to health care professionals providing outpatient, primary care services in rural and underserved communities throughout the Commonwealth. Since 2003, (KSLRP) has served as a recruitment and retention tool to reduce health workforce shortages in rural and underserved locations throughout the state. This program requires a sponsor match.



2024 HIGHLIGHTS

Boards, Committees and Coalitions

- Community Engagement 1,364 hours
- Research 12 hours
- Academics: 264

TOTAL HOURS: 1,640

Community Events/Trainings

- 3,362 individuals participated in events or trainings offered by Center programs.

Value of Services Provided to Rural Residents

- \$3,613,482.60 - CHW services
- \$42,150 - Durable Medical Equipment
- \$2,195,799 - Student Loan Repayment funds distributed

Center Events

- Kentucky Homeplace celebrates 30 years of serving the Commonwealth

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

UK CERH would like to thank the University of Kentucky and community partners for their collaboration and contributions to improving the lives of rural residents across the Commonwealth.



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Scan here to access our website and learn more about our work in Kentucky's rural communities.