



# FOUNDATIONS OF PUBLIC HEALTH MENTOR BIOS

## **Virginia Barnes**

### **Blue Health Initiatives - Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas**

Virginia Barnes has been serving as the director of Blue Health Initiatives for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas since October of 2015. Blue Health Initiatives formalized the company's long-time efforts to improve the health and quality of life of all Kansans. Since its inception, Blue Health Initiatives has invested over \$33 million across Kansas. Pathways to a Healthy Kansas is the signature initiative and is the largest grant program ever administered by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas. It combines community-wide, evidence-based solutions and practices to help Kansas communities improve active living, healthy eating and tobacco prevention. The initiative provides community coalitions with the tools and resources needed to engage their communities and remove barriers to healthy living.

Prior to joining Blue Cross Ms. Barnes spent more than eight years at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) in a variety of roles. She earned a bachelor's in biology from Washburn University and a master's in public health from the University of Kansas. Barnes currently serves on the Kansas Public Health Association Board and numerous advisory committees focused on improving health in Kansas. She is a lifelong Kansan and lives in Topeka with her husband two children.

## **Charlie Bryan**

### **Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health**

Charlie Bryan has dedicated more than 16 years to a distinguished career in public health, with significant contributions in emergency preparedness, community health planning, informatics, and financial management. As a Business Systems Analyst at Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health, he is instrumental in budgeting, financial planning and analysis, and managing collaborations with contracted IT services and supporting optimal implementation of critical software systems.

Charlie served three years in the U.S. Army as a basic medical laboratory specialist, instilling in him a strong sense of duty, discipline, and dedication. Pursuing further education, he obtained a Bachelor of Science in Urban Studies and Planning from Virginia Commonwealth University and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Kansas, laying a strong foundation for his future endeavors.

Charlie was selected for the Leadership Lawrence Class of 2014 and The Kresge Foundation's Emerging Leaders in Public Health initiative in 2017. His leadership was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, earning him the 2021 Kay Kent Excellence in Public Health Service Award for his roles as Logistics Chief for Douglas County Unified Command and leader of the Vaccination Branch's mass vaccination efforts.





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Charlie extends his service beyond his professional duties through significant volunteer work, serving as the president of the board of directors for the Lawrence Community Shelter and as the chair of the executive board for the Douglas County Extension Council. These roles underscore his deep commitment to community welfare and development.

Charlie's unique combination of military service, academic achievement, and public health expertise makes him an ideal mentor for the Foundations of Public Health program.

## **Daniel Craig**

### **Tammy Walker Cancer Center**

Daniel Craig is the Cancer Outreach Coordinator at Tammy Walker Cancer Center. Daniel obtained a Bachelor's of Science degree in Biology from Pittsburg State University and a Master's of Science degree in Health Promotion & Wellness Management from Missouri State University. Daniel completed the Tobacco Treatment Specialist Certification through Mayo Clinic in 2015.

Daniel worked at CKF Addiction Treatment for 12.5 years and has worked at Tammy Walker Cancer Center for five years. He has extensive grant writing, event planning, and public speaking experience. Daniel is a past President of the Kansas Public Health Association, Current Chair of the Governor's Behavioral Health Services Planning Council Tobacco Subcommittee, and current Co-Chair of the Kansas Cancer Partnership. Daniel served on the Salina Area United Way Board of Directors for six years and currently volunteers on the Grants Committee. Daniel is an avid runner and is a co-founder and co-race director of the Salina Crossroads Marathon.

## **Tasha R. Drake**

### **Riley County Health Department**

Originally from Manhattan, KS. I have been navigating the Public Health space since about 2018 as I began work at the Riley County Health Department, I have worn many hats within RCHD but I am now currently in the role of Administrative Assistant helping where I can with about 7 different programs and various county committees and councils. It has been an amazing journey and I am happy to serve the Riley County Area. I have recently participated in the Local Public Health Leadership Series which was a fantastic experience. I have been part of creating a county wide committee that is working toward moving the Riley County as a whole to changing the working culture into an everyone leads culture.

## **Ruaa Hassaballa-Muhammad**

### **Kansas Public Health Association**

As a Public Health Consultant with a background in epidemiology and behavioral psychology, I bring over 10 years of health equity experience, currently serving as President at the Kansas Public Health Association. I seek to strengthen the public health system and build the capacity of public health professionals in Kansas by working with other public health leaders across the Sunflower State. Formerly, I served as the NE Regional Project Manager at the University of Kansas Medical Center for Project COPE (Communities Organizing to Promote Equity), where I worked in addressing COVID-19 health disparities in five Kansas counties. I find fulfillment in



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working with communities of diverse geographical, cultural, and racial backgrounds. Before that, I served as the COVID Testing Equity Project Manager for Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health, where I oversaw surveillance testing efforts for over 100,000 individuals and contributing to the county's Equity Impact Adviser team.

With a global perspective, I served as a Global Health Council Delegate to the World Health Organization's Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland in 2017, and engaged in consultative work in initiatives in the United Kingdom, Australia, Sudan, and Kenya. I've presented and consulted across the U.S. from San Mateo, California, to Atlanta, Georgia.

My academic journey includes a bachelor's degree in medical laboratory science, a master's degree in public health focused on epidemiology, and I'm currently completing a Ph.D. in Behavior Psychology at the University of Kansas, with a focus on community health and development.

Beyond my professional endeavors, I enjoy the outdoors, audiobooks, podcasts, and spending quality time with family and friends.

## **Lisa Horn**

### **Kansas Department of Health and Environment**

I have been in public health for 14 years - first entering the field as a public health communicator after working as a journalist for seven years. I enjoyed providing health information to the public and promoting the health department's programs. But I quickly found myself inspired by the work of the nurses. I wanted to get off the sidelines to help people directly, just like them.

After completing classes (one a semester) to bridge from my previous degree to nursing school I was accepted into an accelerated bachelor of science nursing program. After a very intense year and passing the board exam, I was a RN! I knew I wanted to return to public health, but felt I needed hospital experience first. I worked in the hospital setting and a women's residential substance abuse treatment center before returning to my previous health department.

Now, I work for KDHE and can't imagine a better place that combines my skills and passions of helping health departments and Kansans across the state.

## **Allison Koonce**

### **LMH Health**

Allison Koonce began her career in public health at the American Cancer Society working on advocacy, policy development and coalition building within communities. She then spent 7 years at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment working on chronic disease risk reduction within the Tobacco Use Prevention, Coordinated School Health and Worksite Wellness Programs. In her current position in Community Outreach & Engagement with LMH Health, she works to bring education and health programs focusing on population health to her community. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Health Promotion and a Master of Science in Community



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Health. She has completed the Kansas Public Health Leadership Institute and the Kansas Local Public Health Leadership Series. She currently serves on the Kansas Public Health Association Board and the LiveWell Douglas County Board.

## **Shelby Ostrom**

### **Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health**

Shelby Ostrom is a native Kansan with over seven years of experience in public health and public policy. She serves as the Health Equity Policy Analyst at Lawrence Douglas County Public Health, where she works with the LDCPH staff on implementing legal epidemiology into practice and oversees legislative activities for the organization. Outside of her role, she serves on the board of directors for the Kansas Public Health Association, serves as a mentor for students at KUMC, and sits on the KU-MPH External Advisory Board.

Ostrom has her BA in political science and a MPA in public administration, both from KU. She also has a graduate certificate in public health practice from KUMC in Kansas City. She has also completed training through the CDC's Public Health Law Academy. Outside of work, you'll find Ostrom painting for her greeting card business or spending time with her fiancé, Anthony and their Siamese cat, Hudson.

## **Lynnette Redington**

### **Harvey County Health Department**

Lynnette Redington is in her 12th year as director of the Harvey County Health Department and has over 35 years of experience in community collaboration and prevention work. She has a MEd in Extension Education, focus on youth-at-risk, from the Pennsylvania State University and BS from Rutgers University. In the last 22 years in Harvey County, she has brought over \$2 million dedicated to health promotion and prevention. This health work includes annual KDHE grants, opioid and other substance misuse prevention, trauma-informed and mental health trainings, and countless resources to encourage active participation. To get things accomplished, Lynnette will tell you collaboration is a huge game-changer.

## **Joanna Sabally**

### **WSU Center for Public Health Initiatives**

Joanna has an undergraduate degree in Environmental Studies and a Master of Public Health degree. She has over twenty years of experience in public health, nonprofit management and health care. Joanna discovered her love for public health work as a Peace Corps volunteer in West Africa, where she worked on nutrition and sanitation projects. In Kansas City, she worked on several community-engagement-focused public health initiatives including improving food access, implementing policies that support a healthy built environment and community health improvement planning (CHA/CHIP). Joanna then shifted to administrative roles. She developed and implemented quality improvement and compliance programs and served as the COO of a non-profit healthcare organization. Joanna now works for the Wichita State University Center for Public Health Initiatives.



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## **Katie Schoenhoff**

### **United Methodist Health Ministry Fund**

Katie Schoenhoff serves as the Director of Programs for the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund. In her role she oversees the Health Fund's strategic initiatives in breastfeeding support and early childhood social emotional health.

Additionally she leads Healthy Congregations, a Health Fund program supporting targeted, outcomes-oriented wholistic health ministries in United Methodist churches throughout the Great Plains Conference.

Prior to joining the Health Fund, Katie served as Health Education and Promotion Coordinator at the Reno County Health Department where she worked with community health coalitions.

Katie also worked for McBride Physical Therapy Clinic and Deer Creek High School as an athletic trainer. Katie graduated from Sterling College with a double major in Health/Physical Education and Athletic Training.

## **Brandon Skidmore**

### **Sunflower Foundation**

Brandon Skidmore oversees Sunflower Foundation's health systems work, including public health, mental health, primary and acute care, and the foundation's 13-year investment in integrated care.

He has worked extensively to expand the foundation's national partnerships in the health systems space over the past five years, including recent work with the Bipartisan Policy Center, Network for Excellence in Health Innovation, Well Being Trust Foundation, de Beaumont Foundation, Kresge Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts and the CDC Foundation.

Brandon is a 13-year veteran of state government, having served in a variety of leadership positions within the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) prior to joining the foundation in 2016.