

2025 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA



UNITED WAY
Kaw Valley

UWKAWVALLEY.ORG/ADVOCATE





UNITED WAY OF KAW VALLEY

Until the fight is won, United Way of Kaw Valley creates and cultivates an unbreakable network of support for a strong, healthy and equitable community. We bring together people, companies, and nonprofits to help individuals and families not just survive but thrive. We work to solve issues no single donor, charity or government agency can handle alone. By focusing on the whole family, we help more children graduate and achieve employment success, help more families move from crisis to financial stability and prosperity, and improve the health of individuals and families in our community.

OUR ADVOCACY POLICY

United Way is a policy leader in the nonprofit community because we urge policy makers to set aside partisanship and work together to advance the common good. By doing this we achieve progress on issues important to those who invest in our community and those who receive services supported by our impact and basic needs grants.

United Way uses its convening and advocacy power to unite all our partners—business, labor, nonprofits, and community members—to identify and advance solutions for our community.

Public policy and advocacy give voice to our guiding values. It is our civic obligation to use our experience and knowledge to inform key decision-makers regarding policy, practices, and funding that affect our community.

WE ACHIEVE RESULTS BY:

- Partnering with federal, state, and local governments to improve our region;
- Educating and mobilizing the public to advance solutions for our community; and
- Engaging community partners in policy and investment opportunities.

POLICY AGENDA

United Way's Public Policy Agenda is our platform for issue advocacy at the state and local levels. We support and engage in collective federal advocacy that is consistent with the goals United Way Worldwide (UWW). Advocating for system change is one aspect of our comprehensive approach to supporting our communities. Our areas of focus for the upcoming legislative session include:

- Equitable access to high-quality, affordable childcare.
- Protecting adequate funding for public education.
- Expanding existing healthcare programs, including Medicaid.

LEADERSHIP ROLE

Assume a leadership role, bringing visibility and advice to critical issues

PARTNERSHIP ROLE

Serve as a coalition partner, developing positions and advocating on issues

SUPPORT ROLE

Monitor and respond to requests for support on issues aligned with United Way's mission and impact goals

EDUCATION: Ensuring Child & Youth Success

United Way places its highest priority on working collectively with schools, businesses, and partners to ensure that children enter kindergarten ready to learn, are on track to be successful in reading and math, and graduate on time from high school with the skills necessary for college or a career. We know that high-quality education and the success of students has a lasting effect on our community.

United Way will support, monitor, and partner with organizations on issues that include:

- Expanding access to high-quality, affordable childcare and early-learning opportunities.
- Protecting and increasing investment in evidence-based home visitation programs and early literacy programs.
- Increasing family engagement and community-based involvement (wraparound supports, mentoring, etc.).
- Safeguarding adequate and equitable funding for K-12 schools.
- Improving effective out-of-school time experiences (summer, afterschool, etc.).
- Expanding nutrition programs, including summer food access and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
- Promoting opportunities for post-secondary education and workforce development for youth.

FINANCIAL STABILITY: Promoting Stability and Self-Sufficiency

United Way understands that financial stability and economic opportunities for individuals and families affect the future success of our children and our community. We prioritize opportunities for job training and skill development that lead to sustaining employment, encourage safe and healthy financial relationships, and provide individuals/families with the knowledge and resources to improve overall financial health.

United Way will support, monitor, and partner with organizations on issues that include:

- Increasing access to and strengthening job training and technical education programs.
- Strengthening income support programs that help individuals and families become self-sustaining, such as safe and affordable housing, child care assistance, weatherization, and food assistance.
- Promoting safe and affordable financial services.
- Reducing “predatory lending” practices that hinder borrowers’ ability to repay debts.

United Way will engage in policy to preserve and increase access to the following programs:

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA)	Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)
Child Tax Credit (CTC)	Child Care Assistance (Child Care Subsidy Program)
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	Community Service Block Grant (CSBG)

HEALTH: Supporting Healthy Individuals and Neighborhoods

United Way knows that individual health is a strong indicator of community health. We support policies and programs that promote individual, family, and neighborhood health.

United Way will support, monitor, and partner with organizations on issues that include:

- Increasing access to affordable, quality health care and coverage for children and families.
- Preserving and expanding existing healthcare programs such as Medicaid and CHIP to reduce health disparities.
- Providing coordinated and culturally informed assistance to people accessing medical care and social programs that support a healthy life.
- Expanding access to optometry, auditory and cognitive screenings, and dental care for children.
- Increasing access to healthier foods and beverages through policy changes and investment in a healthier food system, such as Healthy Food Financing and SNAP double-up programs.
- Increasing support to victims of labor or sex trafficking, including resources to agencies serving trafficking survivors.
- Increasing access to trauma-informed substance-use treatment and mental health services and care.
- Re-authorizing Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA), and Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) which provides critical funding to agencies serving victims and survivors of domestic violence.

COMMUNITY: Ensuring a Solid Foundation

An unbreakable network of support starts with a foundation of basic needs. United Way further strengthens our community by investing in neighborhoods, encouraging volunteering and innovation, and fostering civic engagement.

United Way will support, monitor, and partner with organizations on issues that include:

- Investing in and strengthening work and family support programs in the areas of food security, safety from relationship violence and trafficking, health care access, and stable housing.
- Improving civic engagement through voter education, registration, mobilization, and protection, with a focus on strengthening voter engagement/turnout, including same-day voter registration.
- Preventing the elimination of tax deductions for donations to non-profits.
- Protecting the ability for State employees to use payroll deductions for items other than benefit premiums.
- Protecting the ability of local governments to take action through community decision-making and policy to create positive equitable change.

ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

David Jordan, Chair

Will Lawrence

Ethan Spurling

Cheri Faunce

Marilyn Stanley

Adrienne Olejnik

United Way Staff

Jessica Lehnerr

Brett Martin



An important note about Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at UWKV

To truly Live United, we must commit to placing diversity, equity, and inclusion at the forefront of our work, internally and externally. A successful fight for the education, financial stability and health of every person requires that we listen to, learn from and amplify the voices of those who are most in need and those who have been traditionally underrepresented.

We recognize that everyone in our United Way community brings value to our mission. We understand every employee, donor, volunteer, partner and stakeholder brings different experiences, perspectives and expectations.

We respect and encourage insight and participation from all. We actively promote a variety of voices among our staff, volunteer committees and Board of Directors, and the non-profit community.

We commit to being curious and courageous in how we communicate with each other. We do so in a constant effort to grow and move our community forward together.



SHAWNEE

DOUGLAS

JACKSON

JEFFERSON

For more information, or to get involved, email advocacy@uwkawvalley.org



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