

# INTEGRATED HEALTH SCHOLARS PROGRAM

## FOCUSES ON TELEHEALTH TO IMPROVE PATIENT ACCESS

### Program prepares students to provide care in a variety of settings

In the rural and frontier areas of Kansas, residents often live hours away from the nearest health care provider. But with the rise of telehealth seeing their doctor may be as easy as turning on their computer. Because telehealth is the service wave of the future, it has become a core component of the KU School of Social Welfare's Integrated Health Scholars program.

The goal of integrated health care is to more seamlessly coordinate patient care across medical, mental and behavioral health, and other supportive services. Social workers play a key role in this team-based approach by working in tandem with medical professionals to assess patients' needs and conduct mental and behavioral health interventions that help patients achieve their goals.

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The Scholars Program was launched in 2014 to give KU masters of social welfare students the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills for interprofessional clinical practice and leadership in integrated health care. Approximately 28 students per year participate in the year-long program where they engage in a clinical field practicum, participate in monthly training experiences, complete a capstone project, and receive \$10,000 in scholarship funds. To date, 206 students have completed the program and more than \$2 million has been awarded in scholarships.



*While the scholars go on to work in a variety of settings, from primary care clinics to mental health practices to substance use treatment centers, they call on the skills and knowledge they gained during the Scholars Program to help them provide the best integrated care for individuals they serve.*

## Here are the stories of four recent scholars



### **Maria Vicente, MSW**

Counselor and Triple P Parenting Coach, Russell Child Development Center, Garden City  
Practicum: Russell Childhood Development Center, Garden City  
Capstone: Project Development in Early Childhood Mental Health

Maria Vicente is working to ensure that every new mom in Garden City who experiences depression or anxiety receives the treatment she needs. To do so, Vicente draws on the experience she gained as an Integrated Health Scholar, both in her role as a Triple P Coach at Russell Child Development Center and as the counselor of a pilot program developed to equip health care professionals to screen moms for anxiety and depression and refer them for care.

“Having the training on how to integrate different programs into a medical setting has really helped. In the [Integrated Health Scholars] program, they really emphasized the need for mental health to be present in the medical field. This pilot is a way for me to do that. It’s been an incredible opportunity,” Vicente says.

“We have this philosophy, that parents have to be OK for their child to be OK. If we can address parental mental health, it allows them to be more present and available and healthy to raise their children,” she explains. “The impact it’s had on people I have worked with has been incredible.”



### **Meagan Howard, LCSW**

Primary Therapist, Midwest Recovery Centers, Kansas City, Mo.  
Practicum: Research Psychiatric Center, Kansas City, Mo.  
Capstone: The Impact of Voter Engagement on Health Outcomes

Meagan Howard describes herself as “that student” – the kind of high achiever who takes advantage of every opportunity to learn more, experience more, do more in their educational program. So when she first learned about the Integrated Health Scholars program, she jumped at the chance to become a scholar. “I was really excited to understand more about the different levels of practice,” she recounts.

Several experiences during her year as a scholar helped shape her practice as a social worker today, including being exposed to health care needs and systems in rural settings, screening for depression in diabetes clinics, and training in how to use the Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) tool for substance use.

“Being in the program helped give me a lot of tools I still use today. It also helped me to have respect for each position in an organization, and how important that is,” Howard says. “Overall, being in the program expanded my understanding of the world and how systems work. I’m grateful I got to go through the program because it has impacted how successful as I am today.”



### **Heidi Goerzen, LMSW**

Behavioral Health Consultant, Health Ministries, Newton  
Practicum: Prairie View, Newton  
Capstone: Connectedness as Prevention for Adolescent Suicide

When Heidi Goerzen landed her current position in a family medical practice, she was prepared. She knew exactly how integrated health care worked from her year spent as an Integrated Health Scholar. “As a behavioral health consultant, I’m doing integrated care. Knowing the model was beneficial – it wasn’t a brand-new concept for me,” she says.

In this busy family medicine practice, Goerzen works with patients on issues as diverse as smoking cessation to diabetes management. When the medical providers see a need for a mental or behavioral health intervention, they invite Goerzen into the exam room to consult with the patient. She does an assessment of the patient’s needs and develops an intervention to help them meet their goals.

“We look at all the factors contributing to their health,” she says, because considering the whole person leads to better outcomes for patients. “Ultimately, that’s what I want. I want the best for people. I want them to be able to function as well as possible. To be a part of that journey is good – that’s what I like doing.”



### **Christina DiMattia, LMSW, LAC, CTP, LPN**

School Social Worker, USD 475 Geary County  
Practicum: USD 473, Chapman  
Capstone: Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment in Schools

As a school social worker in a rural district, Christina DiMattia sees a lot of students and families in need. “We have students in school who are homeless, so you have to find resources. How do we get them a place to stay? We have students on food stamps, but at first their parents had no idea they even qualified for food stamps. You have to be the advocate that makes it all fit,” she says, “all the while convincing parents we are being helpful and not destructive to their families.”

Her experience as an Integrated Health Scholar has helped her know when and how she can assist students and their families, and where to refer families for additional supports. “Timing is important and as social workers, we must be incredulous with our timing,” she explains.

When she is frustrated by a lack of resources to help address the challenges students face, she calls on two concepts she learned during the Motivational Interviewing training she received as a scholar: sacrifice and acceptance.

“I learned you have to sacrifice – that you can’t help every single person. And that you have to accept that it’s not going to happen today. You can come back tomorrow and give it another shot. Those are two things that are hard for me to accept. [The Integrated Health Scholar trainer] did a wonderful job of helping us understand how to help,” she says. “Finally, utilize our fellow resources. They definitely know what they are doing!”





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