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Improving Health in Rural Counties Grant Addresses Mental Health Services in Central Kansas

GREAT BEND, Kan. (May, 20, 2016) - The Center for Counseling & Consultation (The Center) and the Pawnee County Health Department publicly unveiled a rural health grant program today during the community's observance of Mental Health Awareness Day in Great Bend. The *Improving Health in Rural Counties* grant-funded project is aimed at promoting public awareness for the treatment of mental illness and substance use disorder as well as access to local behavioral health services.

The Centene Foundation for Quality Healthcare awarded a \$110,000 grant last year to The Center and the Pawnee County Health Department to support the collaborative efforts of county health departments and court services/community corrections programs of central Kansas, including Barton, Pawnee, Rice and Stafford counties. The grant will help broaden access to services through technological solutions, including telemedicine.

During today's public event at The Center, the grantees highlighted components of their program, including mental health kiosks and telemedicine screening capabilities.

"We want to thank the Centene Foundation for giving us the opportunity to better equip our communities in central Kansas with the ability to assess mental health needs and address them early on if there are concerns. The Center, along with our public health partners, strongly believes that early intervention leads to healthier and happier lives. This grant has given us the ability to purchase technology that allows people the ability to quickly and anonymously take a simple mental health assessment," said Douglas McNett, executive director of The Center for Counseling & Consultation.

Centene Corporation and its Kansas subsidiary, Sunflower Health Plan, recognize The Center and the Pawnee County Health Department for their innovative efforts to transform the health of rural communities through individual focus and active local involvement.

"Sunflower Health Plan has a responsibility to remove barriers for people accessing services and to support our partners in strengthening Kansas communities. We are honored to be in Great Bend today with The Center, the Pawnee County Health Department and other partners who are leading this innovative program to assess health conditions and improve behavioral health services in rural Kansas," said Chris Coffey, Plan President and CEO.

The Centene Foundation for Quality Healthcare was formed in 2004 to improve the quality of healthcare for medically underserved individuals and families and economically distressed areas. The Foundation supports Centene's purpose to transform the health of the community. Over the years, the Foundation's

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funding projects have included obesity, school-based health clinics, disparities in mental health among black women and education and outreach related to public health programs such as Medicaid. Centene's national behavioral health company, Cenpatico, supported the Foundation's effort to identify an innovative program in Kansas that supports this mission.

"I believe this project will significantly improve the lives of many people in our central Kansas communities through an innovative implementation plan proposed by The Center for Counseling. It is a great opportunity for public health to work in partnership with the community mental health center towards improving mental health and substance abuse in a large rural geographic area. This an excellent example of how community engagement can be a foundation for success in mobilizing partners to identify and solve health problems," Robin Rziha, RN, Administrator, Pawnee County Health Department.

The grant project plan is to purchase the software and equip 11 mental health screen kiosk stations. The initial kiosk locations would include the lobbies of the four county health departments. The other kiosks will then be available for placement in community facilities such as the six community hospitals, the area's family crisis center, libraries, high schools and middle schools in the community mental health center's catchment area.

"The Pawnee County Health Department appreciates the Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD) for sharing this funding opportunity from the Centene Foundation for Quality Healthcare, in collaboration with Cenpatico, to address social determinants and improve health for rural communities. This funding offers a means of addressing mental health and substance abuse issues that have been recognized as priorities from the Community Health Needs Assessments in Barton, Pawnee, Rice, and Stafford counties," said Rziha.

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About The Centene Foundation for Quality Healthcare

The Centene Foundation for Quality Healthcare is a non-profit private foundation dedicated to improving the quality of healthcare in the United States. The Foundation serves as a resource to identify and support innovative approaches to improving and increasing the quality of and access to healthcare for low-income individuals and families. This is accomplished through an inspired philanthropic giving plan that seeks to promote efforts and activities that identify and address core causes of unequal access and treatment in healthcare.

About Cenpatico

Cenpatico's expertise lies in managing benefits for vulnerable populations. Our healthcare specialties include behavioral health, foster care, specialty therapy and rehabilitation and more. We have managed Medicaid and other public sector benefits since 1994; currently, we serve over 4.5 million members nationally. Our headquarters are in Austin, Texas and we have local teams across the country in the markets we serve. Cenpatico is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Centene Corporation. We are committed to innovative solutions and designing programs tailored to improving functional outcomes with our members. Find us online at www.cenpatico.com.

About Sunflower Health Plan

Sunflower Health Plan, a subsidiary of Centene, is a managed care organization established to deliver quality healthcare in the state of Kansas through local, regional and community-based resources. Sunflower is committed to improving the health of its beneficiaries through focused, compassionate and coordinated care in an approach based on the core belief that quality healthcare is best delivered locally. For more information, please visit www.sunflowerhealthplan.com.

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