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## **KU, Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department launch Academic Health Department**

The University of Kansas Work Group on Community Health and Development and the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department have launched a new kind of partnership, called the Academic Health Department, the first in Kansas and one of only a few in the country.

The KU Work Group is a longstanding partner with the Health Department, most recently in facilitating the recent Comprehensive Community Health Assessment, but the Academic Health Department takes the collaboration a step further.

“We hope to ultimately create a shared research agenda with the Health Department,” said Vicki Collie-Akers, assistant research professor, who leads the KU effort, “to merge our goals with theirs.” Collie-Akers will have an office at the Health Department.

Health Department Director Dan Partridge said the Academic Health Department would play a pivotal role in helping his agency evaluate and document the successes and failures of policies and systems that aim to improve community health.

“A major focus will be to answer the question, ‘How well are community-based efforts working to improve health?’ We hope the answers will help inform future decisions promoting the health and vitality of Douglas County,” he said.

The KU Work Group, a WHO (World Health Organization) Collaborating Center, has pioneered understanding the process of how communities create conditions that promote health.

The Academic Health Department will also function like a teaching hospital for KU students in applied behavioral psychology, the Work Group’s academic home, said Collie-Akers.

Short-term goals of the partnership include supporting the implementation and evaluation of Douglas County’s first Community Health Plan that will position the Health Department for accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, a national nonprofit agency.

The KU Work Group on Community Health and Development is one of the 12 centers of the University of Kansas Life Span Institute.

Links: [KU Work Group for Community Health and Development](#)  
[The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department](#)  
[The Community Toolbox](#)  
[The Life Span Institute](#)  
[Public Health Accreditation Board](#)  
[Douglas County Community Health Assessment Report](#)