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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **CHC/SEK Awarded HRSA Grant for Physician Residency Program, in partnership with KUMC**

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) announced today that Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas, Inc. has received a three-year award of \$750,000 to create and establish a new Family Medicine Rural Residency Program, in collaboration with the University of Kansas School of Medicine.

Nancy Rios, Deputy Regional Administrator, HRSA Office of Regional Operations made the announcement Thursday afternoon during a press conference at CHC/SEK's Pittsburg clinic.

The grant is part of a larger \$20 million multi-year initiative by HRSA to expand the physician workforce in rural areas by developing new, sustainable residency programs in family medicine, internal medicine, and psychiatry. The recipients of the awards include rural hospitals, community health centers, health centers operated by the Indian Health Service, Indian tribes or tribal organizations, and schools of medicine.

The Rural Residency Planning and Development Program provides doctors opportunities to train in the rural communities where they actually come from, and where they are more likely to stay and practice. The Rural Residency Program also improves the recruitment and retention of new physicians to underserved rural communities. In addition to the local announcement, HRSA awarded 26 additional grants to recipients in 21 states around the country who will also develop newly accredited, sustainable rural residency programs in family medicine, internal medicine and psychiatry.

Rios noted that HRSA recognizes that health challenges in rural America are clear and urgent. Of the nearly 2,000 rural counties in the United States, about 75% are designated as shortage areas for primary care health professionals, she said. "At HRSA, we are helping to address these challenges through the Rural Residency Planning and Development Program and other initiatives that together will increase opportunities for residents to train in rural communities across America," Rios said.

Resident physicians have completed medical school and have earned an M.D. degree. They practice medicine in a supervised setting for three years to complete training. At full capacity, the residency program at CHC/SEK will support 12 residents graduating four per year; initially, it will train two per year with their first year at KUMC and

their second and third years at CHC/SEK. Of these, at least 50% will practice in rural Kansas in their first five years in the workforce.

Krista Postai, President & CEO of CHC/SEK, said the Rural Residency Planning and Development program would help communities like those CHC/SEK serves through 22 different sites within its health system. “There are nearly 20% fewer primary care doctors per person in rural areas than there are in urban areas. More doctors in southeast Kansas means improved health and quality of life for all who call this home,” she said.

CHC/SEK will partner with and be supported by the School of Medicine’s Family Medicine Residency program – an expansion of an existing relationship with the university that created a CHC/SEK-based rural medicine track for 3rd and 4th-year medical students. This will facilitate the program’s successful accreditation by the ACGME, provide ongoing expertise and connectivity to one of the nation’s first family medicine residency programs, and further strengthen KU’s ability to produce physicians to meet the state’s current and future workforce needs.

Dr. Michael Kennedy, FAAFP, Associate Dean for Rural Health Education and Professor of Family Medicine at the University of Kansas School of Medicine commented “a rural-focused residency training is needed to assure that the doctors faced with the complex problems in locations with limited access to specialty care will be able to manage these patients. “We are hopeful for a future where access to health care in rural Kansas is no longer an issue,” he said.

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About HRSA:

HRSA, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the primary federal agency for improving health care to people who are geographically isolated, economically, or medically vulnerable. HRSA programs help those in need of high-quality primary health care, people living with HIV/AIDS, pregnant women, and mothers. HRSA also supports the training of health professionals, the distribution of providers to areas where they are needed most and improvements in health care delivery.

ABOUT CHC/SEK:

The Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas Inc. is a not-for-profit Federally Qualified Health Center dedicated to providing quality health care to everyone regardless of income or insurance status. CHC/SEK is a patient-owned and operated organization serving more than 50,000 children and adults annually. CHC/SEK employs more than 400 professionals and support staff at 15 clinic sites in Bourbon, Crawford, Cherokee, Labette, Linn, Montgomery, and Allen counties and is governed by a 13-member Board of Directors which includes patients and community representatives.