

## Bringing Treatment Services to Rural College Campuses

Attending college is an exciting milestone in a young person's life. Many students are away from home for the first time. They are eager to make the most of their college experience and newfound independence. Drugs and alcohol are often introduced. Students with substance use infractions may find themselves in trouble with the law or at risk of losing their scholarships. Rural campuses—some as small as 450–600 students—may not have sufficient resources to address budding or full-fledged addiction. The nearest counseling center may be in the next town over, and with limited transportation options, students may find themselves without the help they need. Some lose hope, quit school, and continue down the path of addiction.

The [University of Kansas Medical Center for Telemedicine and Telehealth](#) (UKMCTT) launched a technology-assisted care (TAC) program to deliver telemedicine services to rural 4-year universities and community colleges located throughout Kansas. The goal is to expand opportunities to connect students, their families, and campus health professionals with appropriate substance abuse and mental health treatment services using Web-based technology offered via iPads and desktop computers. According to project manager, Janine Gracy, "If you want students to succeed, you need to have a good handle on prevention, know how to intervene, and also get students into treatment when it's needed." UKMCTT has partnered with campus student service centers to identify a private space where students can log in to meet remotely with health care professionals from the [Central Kansas Foundation](#) and the [University of Kansas Medical Center](#).

The need for campus-based substance abuse services is evident: 95 percent of campus violence is related to alcohol, and 40 percent of students with academic problems also abuse alcohol. However, it is challenging to get young people to admit they need help. Janine recently attended a Central College Health Association conference where student health care professionals from small campuses gather annually to address student health issues. When attendees learned of UKMCTT's program, their enthusiasm was palpable. "I have got to get this program on my campus now," one nurse said.

Students are remarkably adept with and comfortable using technology and appreciate having a service that is easily accessible and free of stigma. "At this age, many are not in the throes of full-fledged addiction, but they are on the road. If we can intervene at this time and plant the seed to get them to think about their behavior and their use of substances, then we've done a great service," Janine said.

Interested in learning more about UKMCTT's approach to substance abuse awareness and treatment services on rural college campuses? Check out the upcoming presentation during the TAC biweekly grantee call Thursday, June 19, at 1 p.m. ET.