



January 26, 2023

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue Southwest  
Washington, D. C. 20250

Secretary Vilsack:

I am writing to offer my support for the Future Service Leaders Foundation's application for a Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant from USDA Rural Development. FSLF's proposed project will help expand mental health services in a six-county region in the Kansas Flint Hills, where healthy residents are essential to maintaining one of the world's most endangered cultural landscapes.

I have seen firsthand the gaps in mental health services in rural Kansas. The state's low counselor to student ratio, which is 1:45, does not begin to tell the full story. My own county, Chase County, Kansas, has a population of 2746 with a population density of 3.5 people per square mile. Our countywide school district, USD 284, serves a K-12 student population of approximately 370. The district employs one licensed social worker and one "student support specialist."

In counties like mine where no mental health services exist, telemedicine is a necessity. But efforts to create this infrastructure are not possible without regional collaboration. I am impressed by the effort FSLF has taken to build support for this project, which will be a crucial first step toward developing a Rural Vitality Center that will provide many needed services for my friends and neighbors in the Kansas Flint Hills.

Should you have any questions regarding this recommendation, please do not hesitate to call me at 785-230-2682 or email me at [christy.davis@usda.gov](mailto:christy.davis@usda.gov).

Respectfully,

Christy Davis  
State Director

Rural Development • Kansas

**Hays Office**  
2715 Canterbury Drive  
Hays, KS 67601  
Phone: (785) 628-3081, Ext. 4  
Fax: (877) 470-3801

**Iola Office**  
202 W. Miller Road  
Iola, KS 66749  
Phone: (620) 365-2901, Ext. 4  
Fax: (877) 470-3801

**Newton Office**  
1405 South Spencer Road  
Newton, KS 67114  
Phone: (316) 283-0370, Ext. 4  
Fax: (877) 470-3801

**Topeka Office**  
1303 SW First American Pl, Ste 100  
Topeka, KS 66604  
Phone: (785) 271-2700  
Fax: (877) 470-3801

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (PDF), found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).