

Sunflower Foundation awards \$200,000 grant to better understand elder abuse in Kansas

The Sunflower Foundation Board of Trustees has awarded a \$200,000 grant to the Center for Practical Bioethics to identify strategies aimed at detecting, addressing and preventing elder abuse in Kansas. [Kathy Greenlee](#), Vice President of Aging and Health Policy at the Center, will oversee the grant.

Over the next 12 months, Greenlee will engage consumers and advocates, as well as state and national experts, to identify best practices and develop strategies and recommendations to address and prevent elder abuse in Kansas. As Vice President of Aging and Health Policy at the Center, her work focuses on advance directives and end of life planning, health care reform, strengthening community organizations and raising awareness about elder abuse. During her career, Greenlee has worked on programs and policies at the local, state, national and international level. Prior to joining the Center, Greenlee had a 25-year career in public service. In 2009, she was appointed U.S. Assistant Secretary for Aging by President Obama. She served in that position until July 2016. Before leaving for Washington, Greenlee spent 18 years in Kansas state government. Among the positions she held was Secretary of Aging, Long-Term Care Ombudsman, General Counsel of the Kansas Insurance Department, and Assistant Attorney General.

“Kathy has been a pioneer in raising awareness about elder abuse and reforming and strengthening systems to support seniors,” says Billie Hall, President and CEO of the Sunflower Foundation. “She brings to this project a unique mix of seasoned experience, well-established relationships with a vast network of local, state and national partners, and a passion to prevent what is a very challenging and complex issue.”

Much like the rest of the country, the percentage of the population over 65 years old is growing and, in Kansas, the median age continues to rise.

According to the National Elder Mistreatment Study (NEMS), nearly one in 10 Americans over the age of 60 have experienced abuse, neglect or exploitation. But these numbers only reflect the cases reported. Experts believe that there are a significant number of cases that go unreported each year. Many communities – and states – lack the support networks necessary to easily identify and report elder abuse.

Greenlee says the primary goal of this project is to identify strategies for addressing both prevention of and response to elder abuse. This will be accomplished, in part, by developing a set of research-based recommendations to strengthen and advance the work already underway in Kansas. “With the support and funding from the Sunflower Foundation, I am thrilled to be able to lead an intensive research project – Addressing Aging Challenges in Kansas – which focuses on elder abuse and aging in Kansas.”

The final report will be released next year. For more information about this initiative, please contact Sunflower Foundation President and CEO Billie Hall at (785) 232-3000 or bhall@sunflowerfoundation.org.