



WICHITA STATE
UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORT
AND RESEARCH

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Support groups available in most counties In Kansas

Wichita – In Kansas, more than 900 local support groups meet in most Kansas counties. Groups gather around a variety of topics. Some topics include: medical conditions, parenting, addiction, mental health, caregiving, grief, disabilities and other topics.

The Wichita State Center for Community Support and Research staff maintains an online database, www.SupportGroupsInKansas.org that contains contact information for local support groups as well as 1,300 national organizations and websites that provide information on a broad range of topics.

Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback proclaimed January as Support Group Awareness Month in a signing ceremony on Friday, Dec. 20, in Topeka. As stated in the proclamation, support groups have been recognized nationally and internationally as an efficient, practical, cost-effective means of coping with life crises and physical and mental health care concerns.

“Support groups pool the experiences of many in order to answer questions, build community and allow an outlet for the many forms of stress and strain,” said Michael Johnston, family caregiver coordinator, SouthWest Kansas Area Agency on Aging. “They help us to stand together despite circumstances which would otherwise overcome us.”

Another benefit to attending a support group is an opportunity to participate in a nonjudgmental environment.

“The first time a parent walked into my office with tears running down her cheek saying she didn't have any place to go and she had a secret she couldn't tell everyone,” said Brian Sutton, Wichita chapter president of Parents Families and Friends of Lesbian and Gays (PFLAG), “Then looking at me and saying ‘My son is gay and I don't know what to do,’ I knew how important it was for PFLAG to be here in Wichita.”

In Overland Park, Paige Gerson facilitates a bipolar/depression support group in conjunction with the Depression & Bipolar Support Alliance.

Gerson said, “We are very excited that individuals who have bipolar or depression, which are real chronic illnesses, will now be able to obtain medical insurance, whereas they have not been able to in the past.”

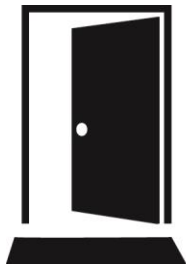
Often, support group participants become leaders of the same group or organization where they found personal recovery and healing.

“Belonging to the Survivors of Suicide group in Wichita has made a critical difference in my grief and healing,” said Jim Yoder, co-facilitator of the Survivors of Suicide Support Group in Wichita. “It allowed me to understand that my pain and questions weren't out of the ordinary for a survivor. It also allowed me a safe place to connect with others who have suffered similar loss. I highly recommend that anyone

wanting to learn and understand more about dealing with loss should consider joining a support group.”

The CCSR’s online database is available at www.SupportGroupsInKansas.org. For those without Internet access, help is available by calling 1-800-445-0116 or 316-978-3843 in Kansas.

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SUPPORT **GROUPS** IN **KS**.ORG

Note:

Please check the database for support groups in your community. Group information can be updated online.