

# Access to Healthcare for Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs in Kansas

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**Introduction.** Approximately 14 million children in the United States live with special healthcare needs (CYSHCN). Despite high prevalence of special needs, healthcare services for CYSHCN often remain insufficient. Previous studies have provided evidence of multiple disparities in access and quality of healthcare in the US for this population. This project aimed to evaluate healthcare access for CYSHCN in Kansas.

**Methods.** Utilizing data from the 2021 National Survey of Children's Health, this study conducted a retrospective and quasi-experimental analysis of healthcare access and barriers. The analysis included 1,696 responses from Kansas households. Children were considered to have special healthcare needs if they had a diagnosis from 24 conditions specified by NSCH.

**Results.** Although a majority of CYSHCN in Kansas reported adequate healthcare access (97.2%), barriers for those with lifelong health conditions remain. Those with lifelong health conditions were more likely to need healthcare and not be able to receive it,  $\chi^2$  (1, n = 1,696) = 21.33; p < .001; OR = 0.24; 95% CI (0.12, 0.46) due to appointment and service unavailability and cost. They were also more likely to have problems paying for medical bills,  $\chi^2$  (1, n = 1,291) = 16.52; p < .001; OR = 0.52; 95% CI (0.37-0.71), and lack health insurance coverage,  $\chi^2$  (1, n = 1,610) = 7.49; p = .006; OR = 0.76; 95% CI (0.64-0.90).

**Conclusions.** While CYSHCN in Kansas generally report adequate healthcare, there are critical barriers to address including cost and access. Improving specialist access, decreasing cost, and enhancing health insurance coverage are essential for advancing healthcare quality for this vulnerable population.