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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Free technology training offered for women in criminal justice system**

**LAWRENCE, KS** – Women in Douglas County who have been incarcerated or under supervision in the criminal justice system are now eligible for free technology education through a partnership with the University of Kansas, Douglas County Criminal Justice Services and Douglas County Court Services.

The Technology Education for Women Transitioning from Incarceration program teaches computer skills that are important for job participation and career advancement, such as Microsoft Office programs, personal branding and website creation and management. It is available to anyone who identifies as female, is 18 or older and has served time or been involved in the criminal justice system. Because the program is funded by a federal grant, there is no charge to Douglas County or to participants.

“One of the goals of Criminal Justice Services is to support clients so they can be successful in the community. The TechEdu program is an incredible opportunity for the women we serve to improve and enhance their job skills,” Director of Criminal Justice Services Pam Weigand said.

About 444 women from Douglas County were incarcerated last year, with 132 under Criminal Justice Services supervision. Reentry programs can be key to help prevent people from reoffending. Participants can enroll in as many of the six phases as they wish. Each phase lasts about five to seven weeks. After completion of each phase, participants receive a certificate of completion they can put on their resumes and reference in interviews.

“We are very excited about this partnership in support of technology education for Douglas County women transitioning from incarceration,” said Hyunjin Seo, Oscar Stauffer Professor and Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development at the KU School of Journalism and Mass Communications and the project principal investigator. “We center our participants’ interests and needs in designing our evidence-based education program, and our close collaboration with program participants has helped continue to improve our program.”

Douglas County District Attorney Suzanne Valdez met with Weigand and Seo to discuss the program before implementation.

“Making a mistake shouldn’t permanently alter your future,” Valdez said. “The DA’s Office fully supports this program that not only offers a second chance for these women but gives them vital skills that will assist in the transition to the next phase of their lives.”

The technology education program was designed by professors, research and students at KU, the University of Kansas Medical Center and the University of Missouri Kansas City. It is supported by a \$1.4 million grant from the National Science Foundation.

For information about program participation, contact Criminal Justice Services at 785-832-5220.

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