



**B L U E P R I N T**  
**F O R**  
**E A R L Y**  
**C H I L D H O O D**

Building a solid foundation for  
Kansas children and families



## Our Vision

### EVERY CHILD THRIVES

All children will have their basic needs met with access to quality early childhood opportunities, so they are prepared to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

Young children, birth to 5, and their families rely on the Kansas early childhood ecosystem. The Blueprint guides decision making system-wide and locally so that all children can access a network of support that promotes: **Healthy Development, Strong Families, and Early Learning**. These three building blocks are the foundation for collaboration across sectors and are intended to guide program design, partnership development, sharing of best practices, and tracking toward long-term outcomes for children and families. Both the **Blueprint** and the **All In For Kansas Kids Strategic Plan** align the activities of those working within the early childhood ecosystem around common goals. Together, these documents prioritize expanded access, greater availability, and seamless navigation of programs and services for young children and their families. The Blueprint also guides the investment portfolio of the Kansas Children's Cabinet.

## Why Early Childhood?

Children who experience high-quality programs and interventions demonstrate positive effects that last a lifetime. Because these programs promote healthy development, strong families, and early learning, research shows they reduce the need for more expensive interventions later in life, such as special education, grade repetition, substance use treatment, or incarceration.

Kansas children and families directly benefit from these programs and so do the many committed professionals who make early childhood their career. In fact, all of us benefit from care and education that is high-quality, affordable, and accessible. Parents are more likely to be employed when child care and other early childhood services are plentiful and within reach. Local economies are boosted by strong labor

force participation and enhanced buying power. And, in turn, economically vibrant communities contribute to our state's overall prosperity.

We commit to improving the health and well-being of Kansas children and families because we know:

- A child's brain grows the fastest in early childhood.
- Supportive relationships and thriving communities create a flourishing environment for early development.
- The best possible start in life requires that we all work together to build a solid foundation across the three building blocks during the critical early years.
- Investments in early childhood yield significant dividends.

# Blueprint Building Blocks



## Healthy Development

PRIMARY CARE

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

EARLY IDENTIFICATION

**Kansas children and families thrive when they can access comprehensive health and developmental services. Kansas will...**

- Promote early prenatal care and education, insurance coverage, and ongoing pregnancy support
- Promote comprehensive care and insurance coverage for children and families
- Improve access to prevention and intervention services in early childhood for optimal health outcomes
- Screen for healthy development
- Overcome barriers and stigma around accessing mental health care and services
- Support children with disabilities in their natural environments
- Address workforce shortages/gaps in health and behavioral care services



## Strong Families

PARENT SUPPORT

SAFE, STABLE, NURTURING  
RELATIONSHIPS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Kansas children and families are stronger when their basic needs are met. Kansas will...**

- Support parent involvement and leadership
- Promote safe, stable, and nurturing relationships to ensure children have strong, healthy starts
- Support opportunities for families to earn a living wage
- Promote cross-sector partnerships to address comprehensive needs of families, including food and housing security
- Promote, evaluate, and enhance evidence-based family support programs
- Promote the facilitation of peer-to-peer support opportunities
- Support family-friendly workplace policies to help employees reconcile their work and family responsibilities



## Early Learning

CHILD CARE

PRE-K

EARLY LITERACY

**Kansas children are prepared for success in kindergarten and beyond when their families can access quality care and education. Kansas will...**

- Ensure basic needs are met by promoting adequate funding for core services and quality enhancements
- Promote a range of choices in early learning experiences (e.g. community-based, school-based, home-based, faith-based) and support economic development of businesses to maximize high-quality options
- Promote effective navigation of services by families transitions over the life course, including transitions into kindergarten and across sectors, as children and families seek services and support
- Support career pathways for the workforce with avenues for professional development based on established core competencies
- Support the use of early learning standards to increase consistency and quality of services

## What Does a Solid Foundation Look Like?

- Pregnant women receive prenatal care and education
- Infants are born at adequate birth weights, are safe and stable, and receive optimal nutrition and nurturing
- Families can afford early childhood care and education
- Children receive physical and mental health screenings and interventions, are current with immunizations, and reach developmentally appropriate milestones
- Early care and education professionals are highly qualified and well-compensated
- Child care facilities and homes, early learning programs, and family support services are high quality and able to meet the demand for services
- No children experience poverty, abuse, or neglect

**The prosperity of our state depends on the well-being of our youngest Kansans. Investments in early childhood benefit us all and pay dividends for decades.**

## Thriving Communities

Every child deserves the opportunity to thrive. It is essential—both for the child and for the overall prosperity of Kansas—that young children are supported in families and communities who help them reach their full potential. Local leaders and service providers who spend considerable time listening to, and working alongside, families and young children are best positioned to understand and address local needs and aspirations. Coordinated community services, with participation from the private sector, make Kansas cities and towns more attractive and improve residents' quality of life.

Thriving communities promote healthy development, strong families, and early learning while offering community members a sense of connection and purpose, feelings of security and belonging, and a network of supports and resources to promote well-being. In thriving communities:

- Public policy and investments reflect the importance of early education, developmental health, and family supports
- Public-private partnerships are formed to maximize investments and develop innovative solutions to local challenges
- Comprehensive, community-based resources and services improve outcomes for children and families

## Early Childhood Ecosystem

The Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem is the robust system of programs, services, and infrastructure that support young children and their families. As in any ecosystem, components interact in complex and symbiotic ways to deliver impact. This Blueprint describes the impact we expect to see from a healthy, high-functioning ecosystem.



## Our Future

In the **KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD ECOSYSTEM** all families have informed and timely access to quality services. All families get the right services at the right time to match their level of need. And all Kansas families live in thriving communities.

**KANSAS  
CHILDREN'S CABINET  
AND TRUST FUND**

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The **Blueprint for Early Childhood** was first produced by the Kansas Children's Cabinet in 2014, incorporating several cross-sector efforts to design and build a thriving early childhood system. The January 2025 edition was updated to include the voices of thousands of Kansans as detailed in *All In For Kansas Kids Needs Assessments* (2019, 2020, 2021, 2024). It also aligns efforts of the *All In For Kansas Kids Leadership Team* with representation from the Kansas Children's Cabinet, the Kansas Department for Children and Families, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and the Kansas State Department of Education.