

KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD RECOMMENDATIONS PANEL

Monthly Meeting Minutes
Friday, November 21, 2025



Visit the [Children's Cabinet website](#) for meeting materials and the [YouTube recording](#).

Members Present

Mallory Arellano, Newman University
Brenda Bandy, First 1,000 Days
Kansas/Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition
Rebecca Clancy, Russell Child
Development Center
Amy Gottschamer, Googols of Learning
Child Development Center
Kim Kennedy, Kansas Department for
Children and Families (DCF)
Karen MacCrory, Mitchell County
Partnership for Children
Patty Peschel, KCCTO
Bethany Samuel, Kansas Department for
Children and Families
Malissa Martin, SparkWheel, Inc.
Marites Altuna, Kansas State School for
the Blind
Tammie Benham, Southeast Kansas
Library System
David Brock, McPherson USD 418
Pshyra Bedell, USD 231
Janelle Dean, Asbury Child Development
Center
Laura Evins, USD 252 Southern Lyon
County
Kelly Frantz-Langford, TARC
Natalie McClane, Kansas State
Department of Education
Rebekah Meitler, USD 323/ Kansas State
University
Trina Morgan, Kansas Children's Service
League

Tabatha Rosproy, Kansas Parent
Information Resource Center
Cornelia Stevens, TOP Early Learning
Centers
Lisa Schmidt, Women's Community Y of
Leavenworth, Kansas
Melissa Schoenberger, Chair, Kansas
Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund
April Shuman, Gigi's Child Care Home
Natalie Sollo, KUSM-W
Rebecca Stewart, Supporting Care
Providers of Kansas
Desiree Streight, Little Explorers
Playschool and CCPC Secretary
AbdulRasak Yahaya, Open Minds Child
Development Center
Christi Smith, Child Care Aware of Kansas
Heather Faulkner, Reno County Child
Care Task Force
Talia Juiliano-Myers, Child Care Aware of
Eastern KS
Christina Small, Salina Area United Way
Jenny Smith, Kansas Parents as
Teachers
Audrey Waid, Little Learners Childhood
Connections
Mandi Waugh, Child Start

Minutes

Welcome

Melissa Schoenberger, called the meeting to order with a quorum present, described processes for a remote meeting, and directed participants to the [Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund website](#) for meeting materials.

November Meeting Agenda

Natalie McClane moved to approve the agenda and AbdulRasak Yahaya seconded, with a unanimous vote to approve the agenda as presented.

October 17, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Marites Altuna moved to approve the October minutes, and Christina Small seconded, with a unanimous vote to approve the minutes as presented.

Kansans' Open Forum - Written and Verbal Comments

Kansans are encouraged to submit comments through the [Kansans' Open Forum Comment Form](#) by 5:00pm the day preceding each meeting to share written comments or to sign up to share verbal comments with the Panel during this portion of the meeting. No comments submitted.

Kansas In The News

Melissa Schoenberger introduced a new segment called *A Segment of Kansas in the News*. The discussion opened with an update on recent Kansas news, noting that Governor Kelly proclaimed November 18 as National Injury Prevention Day. The Kansas Children's Cabinet, a member of the Safe Kids Kansas coalition along with many partner agencies on the panel, used this opportunity to highlight the importance of safety within the early childhood

KANSAS IN THE NEWS



Our Mission

We work to keep all kids safe from preventable injuries.

By Aja Carter

Published: Nov. 17, 2025 at 3:00 PM CST



TOPEKA, Kan. (WIBW) - Gov. Laura Kelly proclaimed Tuesday, Nov. 18, as National Injury Prevention Day in Kansas.

The proclamation serves to help safety advocates educate the community about ways to create a safer environment.

The day sheds light on the importance of injury and violence prevention.

"Approximately every two minutes, a preventable injury-related death occurs in the U.S.," said Cherie Sage, State Coordinator for [Safe Kids Kansas](#). "The good news is many of these injuries and deaths are preventable by using safety practices, products and smart policies."

Keeping Kids Safe:

- Poison Prevention
- Safety in Vehicles
- Toy Safety
- Home Safety
- Bike & Wheeled Sports
- Fire & Burn Prevention
- Weather/Disaster Preparedness
- Child Care



Resources:

<https://www.safekidskansas.org/index.htm>

ecosystem. The group emphasized actions such as ensuring children wear helmets when biking and have access to appropriate equipment. Safe Kids Kansas, housed within the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, offers a wide range of resources on its website.

Participants were encouraged to explore these materials as the holiday season approaches, including information on toy safety, fire and burn prevention, and the risks associated with increased candle use. For more information about the highlight on what's happening in Kansas and other relevant details, please refer to the [November's Early Childhood Recommendation Panel](#) time stamps 6:50-8:50.

Panel Introductions

Melissa Schoenberger facilitated the transition into this section by providing an opportunity for panel members to introduce themselves. This portion of the meeting focused on panel introductions. Below is a snapshot list of the panels that were able to introduce themselves.

PANEL INTRODUCTIONS

- Tabatha Rosproy

1 to 2 minutes 

- Tabatha Rosproy introduced herself as a representative of the Kansas Parent Information Resource Center, where she serves as the Early Childhood Project Coordinator. She shared that she previously worked as an early childhood classroom teacher for about thirteen years and was recognized as the 2020 National Teacher of the Year as well as the Kansas Teacher of the Year. She also noted that she was recently appointed to the Children's Cabinet by Governor Kelly and expressed that she is glad to be part of the group.

For more information about each panel member, including their roles, purpose for participating, and other relevant details, please refer to the [November's Early Childhood Recommendation Panel](#) time stamps 8:51-11:04.

Parent Survey Early Childhood Data Presentation

Priya Vanchy and Nishat Tasnim (KU-CPPR) shared results from the Parent Survey and engage Panel members in a discussion around how this data can be used to inform work group and community efforts.

Kansas Parent Survey – Summary

The Kansas Parent Survey captured the well-being of families across the state, focusing on economic stability, physical environment, community engagement, and social context. Data from over 2,000 respondents combines both quantitative scores and qualitative insights, offering a comprehensive view of family life in Kansas.

Note (s): We have county level information for each of the respondents. And shared regional distributions like Kansas City Region 25% and Wichita Region 27% and NW, NE, SW and SE regions were more or less evenly distributed in terms of respondents."

- In terms of **economic well-being**, families reported moderate improvements in household financial security, though challenges remain. Many families continue to experience stress due to income volatility and the high cost of child care. Qualitative responses highlight the gap between income and cost of living, showing that even families with stable employment struggle to afford housing and child care. Child care availability remains a critical barrier to workforce participation and entrepreneurial pursuits.
- Regarding the **physical environment and neighborhoods**, slight improvements were observed in housing quality, neighborhood safety, and sense of belonging, with housing quality scores increasing from 3.34 to 3.47 and neighborhood safety from 3.56 to 3.72. Severe housing issues, such as overcrowding and cost burdens, are concentrated in counties like Crawford, Gray, and Riley. Families report feeling “locked out” of the housing market despite stable employment, underscoring that affordability—not just housing quality—is the main barrier. Many families also emphasize the need for more safe, family-centered recreational and community spaces.
- The **social and community context** domain highlights strong family relationships and high parenting confidence, with mean scores around 4 out of 4. Social support and community engagement have improved moderately, indicating room for growth. Nearly half of families rely on trusted friends and family to access services, rather than online tools, illustrating the importance of personal networks. Barriers such as strict eligibility thresholds and bureaucratic obstacles continue to limit access, particularly for home-based child care providers, who may appear low-income after tax deductions despite being financially stable.

Key insights include:

- Economic pressures, especially income, childcare, and housing affordability—remain the largest barriers to family well-being.
- Physical and social environments show modest improvements but alone are insufficient to drive meaningful change.
- Trust and social networks are crucial for connecting families to services.
- Families need more safe and accessible community spaces.
- Policy interventions should focus on expanding housing affordability, supporting home-based child care providers, and reassessing assistance eligibility criteria.

The final portion of the Kansas Parent Survey presentation highlighted ongoing structural challenges in family well-being, even as families report small improvements. Participants emphasized that availability of services does not guarantee access, as trust, continuity, and relationships play a critical role in connecting families to needed resources. Long waitlists, especially for child therapy and mental health services, create frustration and underline gaps in the system. Parents expressed appreciation for community warmth and support groups, which provide hope and connection, yet structural barriers remain a significant obstacle. Families in the “middle” income bracket—those earning too much to qualify for assistance but not enough to meet basic expenses—often fall through the cracks, highlighting the need for resources that target this group.

Key themes and observations:

- **Access vs. availability:** Families often encounter structural barriers despite services being present. Trust, personal relationships, and continuity are essential for meaningful access.
- **Community warmth vs. structural gaps:** Supportive community networks provide hope and connection, but systemic limitations, such as long waitlists, hinder timely service access.
- **Middle-class families at risk:** Families who earn too much to qualify for assistance yet struggle with stability are particularly vulnerable, emphasizing the need for tailored resources.
- **Small improvements in well-being:** Survey respondents reported slight increases in well-being compared to the previous year, though mean scores remain moderate (around 3 out of 5), indicating families are generally “getting by” rather than thriving.
- **Survey design considerations:** The well-being section of the 2025 survey was introduced for the first time, with retrospective self-assessment capturing both current and prior-year perceptions. Future surveys will help identify trends over time and among different populations.
- **Regional insights:** While overall sample sizes are robust, county-level data may be limited; regional analyses or combining neighboring counties can provide more reliable insights.

- **Importance for panel work:** These findings inform the panel's cross-cutting recommendations and highlight areas for targeted interventions, emphasizing the connection between economic, physical, and emotional well-being.

Overall, the discussion reinforced that small statistical changes do not always equate to meaningful improvements in daily life. Continued attention to access, trust, structural barriers, and targeted support for vulnerable families is critical to improving family well-being across Kansas. To hear this entire presentation please refer to the [November's Early Childhood Recommendation Panel](#) time stamps 48:35-1:45:33.

Work Group Summary & Reports

Melissa Schoenberger introduced updates from each work group. Please refer to the [November's Early Childhood Recommendation Panel](#) time stamps 1:45:25-1:57:53 to hear more about what was discussed.

2025-2026 WORK GROUPS

Ecosystem: Combined groups, aligned goals across pillars, combining and narrowing ideas

Family Friendly Workplaces: CCA KS joined workgroup

Targeted Journey: Reaching out for system collaboration – KSDE, KCCTO, Customized Early Education, defining terms across system

Mental Health: Working definition, defining MH ecosystem, assessing current work and exploring opportunities across sectors, move forward 10/15 event seeds

Update



Resources and Events

- The Family Advisory Council is recruiting members for their Fatherhood, Early Childhood and Women/Maternal work groups. Learn more at: [Family Advisory Council About Us | KMCH](#)
- Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Investigation Training, December 12 (Leavenworth). Who should attend: Social workers, LEO, EMS, fire. Register at: [Kansas Infant Death & SIDS - Home](#)
- KCCTO FAN Training (Facilitating Attuned Interactions), This training is ideal for early childhood professionals who provide coaching, consultation, technical

assistance or supervision. January 7-8, 2026 (Manhattan). Register at: [FAN Training: Facilitating Attuned Interactions - KCCTO](#)

Panel Input for Early Childhood Governance Summit

During this section, members shared their thoughts on the upcoming summit and discussed ideas and priorities they would like to see incorporated into the event, which is scheduled for early next year.

Bright Spots:

Melissa concluded the meeting by sharing several heartwarming stories and highlights that celebrate the great work happening across the state. Below is a visual presentation showcasing various bright spots from across the Kansas region, with accompanying notes that provide context and illustrate how these efforts align with broader early childhood initiatives.



- Several recent events and achievements in Kansas were highlighted. First, a national parents and teachers conference took place in Puerto Rico. Lisa from KSDE attended and shared exciting news that Kansas received two of the four national awards given at the conference. George, representing USD 202 in Kansas City, was named Parent Educator of the Year, and Britney from Shaunie Mission USD 512 received the inaugural Parents Choice Award.
- At the governor's conference, Dr. Byers from KU CPPR was recognized for her dedication to supporting families in Kansas.

- Melissa Martin shared updates from site visits at Ottawa Middle School, highlighting programs supporting children from early childhood through career readiness.
- Camp Connect, organized by the Child Care Coalition of Kansas, provided home childcare providers an opportunity to regroup and recharge. April from CCPC was acknowledged for her work organizing the event.
- Additionally, Tammie shared a post from the Kansas Library Association recognizing the best small library in Toronto, Kansas, a community of fewer than 500 people. Jesse, the library director, was commended for providing programming that supports children and families, emphasizing the impact of these efforts on the community.

If you would like to hear about this month's bright spots that were highlighted please check out [November's Early Childhood Recommendations Panel](#) timestamp: 1:58:52-2:04:53

Upcoming Meetings: (all via Zoom)

- Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund meeting – Friday, December 5, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
- Early Childhood Recommendations Panel meeting – Friday, December 19, 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 11:04 a.m.