

NEW CABINET MEMBER GUIDE

Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund



June 2026

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Welcome!

Welcome to the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund (KCCTF), often abbreviated in much of our published work as the "Cabinet," or the "Kansas Children's Cabinet."

Use the Table of Contents to navigate this guide which is designed to acquaint new Cabinet Members with the Cabinet's statutory charge, operations, and impact.

As Cabinet Members and staff, we are honored to serve the children and families of our state as we collaborate with partners across the early childhood ecosystem.

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.

WEBSITES

[Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund website](https://kschildrenscabinet.gov)

<https://kschildrenscabinet.gov>

[All In For Kansas Kids Early Childhood Ecosystem website](https://allinforkansaskids.org)

<https://allinforkansaskids.org>



CABINET YOUTUBE

[Live streaming and archives](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8zbWoxBloqVsL2oI7A5o8g) of Cabinet and Panel meetings, summits, and other public events.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8zbWoxBloqVsL2oI7A5o8g>

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Background

CABINET PURPOSE AND ORIGIN

Created by the Kansas Legislature in 1999, the Cabinet is directed by state statute to manage and evaluate use of the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF), which is funded by the annuity from the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement.

The Kansas Legislature created the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY Fund) to receive the annual payout with the intent of building an endowment that could grow to a size that would create sustaining funding from investment income. Statute directs the legislature to appropriate an annual transfer from the KEY Fund to the CIF. The Cabinet has a defined statutory role and responsibilities related to the use of these funds.

HISTORY

1980. Kansas was the first state in the nation to establish a special fund, The Kansas Family and Children Trust Fund, dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Trust Fund dollars provided funding for community-based prevention programs that implement a wide range of strategies designed to assist families and individuals in preventing child abuse and neglect.

1991. Kansas legislative leaders were particularly interested at this time in taking significant actions toward confronting issues facing children and families. As a result, the Legislature approved a Special Committee on Children's Initiatives to meet during the months between legislative sessions to explore in earnest the needs of Kansas children and families. This committee developed a plan that became known as the Blueprint for Investing in the Future of Kansas Children and Families.

1992. The Legislature created the Corporation for Change to implement the Blueprint and promote system reform in children and family services. The Corporation for Change was given the responsibility for administering the Children's Trust Fund.

1998. The Corporation for Change was replaced by a new committee, the Governor's Advisory Committee on Children and Families. At this time, administration of the Children's Trust Fund became the responsibility of the Kansas Department for Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS - now known as the Department for Children and Families).

1999. Through legislative action, the Governor's Advisory Committee on Children and Families and the Children's Trust Fund were abolished and the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY Fund) and the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF) were created. This statute established the Kansas Children's Cabinet to oversee the use of the KEY Fund and the CIF and evaluate their impact annually. SRS was designated to serve as the fiscal agent for the newly formed Cabinet.

2006. Based on the statutory requirement to engage an institution of higher learning to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs and services receiving CIF funding, the Cabinet partnered with the Institute for Educational Research and Public Service at the University of Kansas (now known as the Center for Public Partnerships and Research, or CPPR) to create an accountability framework. This CIF Accountability Process provides details annually on all programs supported by CIF and involves a multi-phase process of information gathering, description and assessment of programs, and synthesis of data across programs.

Background

HISTORY (cont'd)

2009. The first Early Childhood Block Grants (ECBG) were awarded to fourteen grantees. The ECBG grant process is driven by accountability measures and research-based programming, with a focus on serving all Kansans in need.

2012. Through a strategic mapping process of fourth grade reading proficiency, early childhood health indicators, child maltreatment rates, and poverty levels, the Cabinet identified nine geographic areas in Kansas with high concentrations of need. The Cabinet prioritized serving these nine targeted areas through ECBG.

2013. The Cabinet began its Common Measures Initiative. ECBG and CBCAP (Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention) grantees use common measurements to assess progress on child and family outcomes, which are reported via a data system known as DAISEY. The Cabinet is committed to a system of strong, shared accountability to tell the story of early childhood investments in Kansas.

2014. Built on more than a decade of past work, the Cabinet developed its strategic framework, the Blueprint for Early Childhood, to guide and align investments in an intentional and measurable way.

2016. The fiscal agent for the Cabinet transitioned from the Department for Children and Families to the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE).

2020. By Executive Order 20-02 the Cabinet became the designated state Early Childhood Advisory Council (as required for every state by federal Head Start legislation) and established the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel as a key component of the governance structure supporting early childhood initiatives in Kansas.

2025. The Kansas Legislature passed House Bill 2045 with bipartisan support to unify early childhood services in Kansas. The bill created the Office of Early Childhood to streamline access to high-quality early childhood care and education, helping families and early childhood professionals easily get the resources and support they need.

The bill amends K.S.A. 38-1901 to move the Kansas Children's Cabinet to the new office along with a total of 20 programs transferring from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), and Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF). Planning began July 1, 2025, with the new office becoming operational by July 1, 2026.

This legislation revised the Cabinet Board members' terms of service, amended members' terms of service, and added two new voting members. It also added a non-voting advisory member (the Director of the Office of Early Childhood) and required all legislative appointments to be elected lawmakers.

Cabinet Members and Staff

FIVE VOTING MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR

Dr. LeEtta Felter, Cabinet Chair (Olathe, KS)

David Younger (Oakley, KS)

Dr. Tara Wallace (Topeka, KS)

Tabatha Rosproy (Winfield, KS)

Lori Blake (Salina, KS)

SIX VOTING MEMBERS APPOINTED BY LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP

Sen. Renee Erickson, Senate President appointee (Wichita, KS)

Sen. Tory Marie Blew, Senate Majority Leader appointee (Great Bend, KS)

Sen. Dinah Sykes, Senate Minority Leader appointee (Lenexa, KS)

Rep. Kristey Williams, Speaker of the House appointee (Augusta, KS)

Rep. Laura Williams, House Majority Leader appointee (Lenexa, KS)

Rep. Suzanne Wikle, House Minority Leader appointee (Lawrence, KS)

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)

Christi Smith, Director, Kansas Office of Early Childhood

Laura Howard, Secretary, Kansas Department for Children And Families

Designee: Jennifer Bretsnyder, Director of Prevention Services

Blake Flanders, President & CEO, Kansas Board of Regents

Designee: Brandi Wells

Janet Stanek, Secretary, Kansas Department of Health & Environment

Designees: Derik Flerlage & Amy Dean Campmire, Bureau of Family Health

Jake Steel, Commissioner, Kansas State Department of Education

Designee: Amanda Petersen, Director, Early Childhood

Matthew Billinger, Coordinator, Juvenile Justice Oversight Committee, Kansas Department of Corrections

Hon. Melissa Standridge, Kansas Supreme Court Justice

CABINET STAFF

Melissa Rooker, Executive Director (as of July 1, 2026, Kansas Office of Early Childhood Deputy Director of the Children's Cabinet)

Craig Barnes, Assistant Director (as of July 1, 2026, Kansas Office of Early Childhood Assistant Deputy Director of the Kansas Children's Cabinet)

Melissa Schoenberger, Early Childhood Systems Specialist (as of July 1, 2026, Kansas Office of Early Childhood Deputy Director of Home Visiting)

Dyogga Adegbore, Program Consultant II

Christie Wyckoff, Early Childhood Program Manager

Megan Brohaugh, Administrative Specialist

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Cabinet Business

MEETINGS

The Cabinet meets bi-monthly on the first Friday morning in **February, April, June, August, October** and **December**. Meetings are typically held virtually via Zoom beginning at 9am and last 2-3 hours. Meetings are subject to the Kansas Open Meetings Act (KOMA), and the public is invited to watch these meetings on the Cabinet YouTube account. Special meetings may be called as needed and may be held either virtually or in person. The Cabinet also holds an annual in-person board retreat.

The Kansas Early Childhood Recommendations Panel (Panel) meets virtually every month, and all meetings are livestreamed publicly. Cabinet and Panel meeting announcements, minutes, and document archives are posted on the Cabinet website.

HOW WORK IS CONDUCTED

FISCAL AGENT

Currently, the **Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE)** serves as the fiscal agent for the Cabinet. An MOU between the Cabinet and KSDE details this relationship. KSDE provides a variety of support to the Cabinet, including fiscal services, information technology support, and human resource services so the Cabinet does not need to carry staff to provide those services. Beginning July 1, 2026, the Cabinet will become part of the Kansas Office of Early Childhood (KOEK), replacing KSDE in these roles.

EVALUATION AND COORDINATION PARTNERS

The Cabinet contracts with two institutions of higher education to conduct various aspects of its work. University partnerships are a statutory requirement and a key way for the Cabinet to manage the depth and breadth of its portfolio with a small administrative structure. Contracted partners support the Cabinet in mobilizing, coordinating, and facilitating program and evaluation activities. The University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research conducts the annual Accountability Process and the Center for Applied Research and Evaluation at Wichita State University leads the ECBG evaluation and Common Measures Initiative.

[Center for Public Partnerships and Research \(CPPR\) at KU](https://cprr.ku.edu) <https://cprr.ku.edu>

CPPR partners with communities, government, and nonprofit organizations across the country to optimize the well-being of children and families. They bring a multidisciplinary team of researchers, data scientists and systems-thinkers, to catalyze change and make measurable improvements. CPPR is valued for contributing a broad array of unique resources and applying strategic foresight in areas like early childhood, public health, child and family well-being, and future-focused leadership.

[Center for Applied Research and Evaluation at WSU](https://communityengagementinstitute.org/centers-and-initiatives/center-for-applied-research-evaluation) <https://communityengagementinstitute.org/centers-and-initiatives/center-for-applied-research-evaluation>

The Center assists organizations and communities in developing clarity about the need for, and effectiveness of, their efforts or services. They offer help with logic model development, community needs assessments, program evaluations, surveys, focus groups, and other types of data gathering, analysis, and reporting. They provide expertise, collaboration, user-friendly reports, and actionable data, helping others document impact and determine what changes to pursue.

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CIF ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS

Kansas statute requires appropriations from CIF to be data-driven and outcomes-based and requires the Cabinet to conduct an annual assessment of CIF investments. As a condition of funding, CIF programs collect and use data to help ensure broad impact – all programs participate in an annual evaluation and accountability process. The findings are used to provide recommendations to the governor and the legislature related to the use of CIF funds.

The CIF Accountability Process was recognized in the 2016 efficiency study commissioned by the Kansas Legislature and conducted by Alvarez and Marshall as holding programs to a high standard, driving innovation, and working with agencies to jointly plan and align funding across state priorities. Our process was also recognized by the 2020 Legislative Post Audit in their 2020 audit of the Department of Commerce Economic Development Incentives Fund as a model for the type of LPA-recommended best practices for evaluation of grant programs.

COMMON MEASURES INITIATIVE

Having a clear understanding of the data and science of early childhood programming enables us to direct resources to the most effective strategies at the right time for optimal impact. The Common Measures Initiative relies on a shared measurement system to collect data across Cabinet-funded programs that helps demonstrate the need for investment in CIF (including ECBG) and CBCAP services. The Common Measures align with the three building blocks of the Cabinet's Blueprint for Early Childhood:

Healthy Development - Developmental screenings; measures of school readiness

Strong Families - Measures of parental support/stimulation for a child in their home; measures of positive, supportive, and nurturing parenting and family environments

Early Learning - Developmentally appropriate measures of communication and problem solving; measures of emerging literacy and numeracy skills in Pre-K; measures of the quality and supportiveness of early learning environments

ANNUAL REPORT

The Cabinet produces a report annually to document the accountability process, provide updates on progress for funds it oversees, report on Common Measures, and make recommendations to the governor and legislature. This report is presented for final review and adoption by the Cabinet Board at their December meeting and then made available on the Cabinet website and in printed copies upon request.

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HOW WORK IS FUNDED AND PRIORITIZED

TOBACCO MASTER SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT (KEY Fund, CIF)

Distribution of Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement proceeds are guaranteed for states in perpetuity. The formula for distributing tobacco payments is based on calculations of each state's smoking-related health care costs. With the adoption of federal and state Tobacco 21 Initiatives, other smoking cessation efforts, the shift to non-combustible forms of nicotine (e-cigarettes and other vaping products) and other efforts, the consensus projections predict that over time states will see a reduction in the annuity.

The 1999 Kansas Legislature enacted legislation directing how tobacco settlement payments and other tobacco revenues would be used in Kansas. K.S.A. 38-2101 established the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) Fund, into which tobacco payments are credited. The KEY Fund is managed by the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System (KPERS) Board of Trustees. The statute stipulates that transfers shall be made from the KEY Fund to the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF), also created by legislation (K.S.A. 38-2102), from which expenditures will be made for the "purpose of providing additional funding for programs, projects, improvements, services, and other purpose directly or indirectly beneficial to the physical and mental health, welfare, safety, and overall well-being of children in Kansas."

EARLY CHILDHOOD FOCUS

Since the beginning, the Cabinet's work has prioritized early childhood programs for children ages birth to 5, including prenatal and family supports. Decades of scientific research underscore the importance of high-quality early childhood programs and experiences and demonstrate that investing early in a child's life pays dividends for decades. Children who experience high-quality early childhood services tend to have better educational and health outcomes, higher graduation rates, and earn higher lifetime salaries. Additionally, high-quality early learning opportunities have been shown to lessen the harmful effects of economic insecurity, toxic stress, and trauma for children whose basic needs are not met early in life.

The Blueprint for Early Childhood (Blueprint), formally adopted by the Cabinet in 2014, serves as our state's strategic framework for ensuring that every child thrives. It guides decision making system-wide and locally so that communities, providers, and families can access a network of support that promotes healthy development, strong families, and early learning. These three Blueprint "building blocks" are the foundation for collaboration across sectors and are intended to guide innovative program design, partnership development, and sharing of best practices to support improvement in 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 guide the Cabinet's investment profile and prioritize improved access, greater availability, and seamless navigation of programs and services for young children and families.

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ONE-TIME FUNDING

Over the past several years, the Cabinet has been the steward of a larger budget than normal due to several unique, one-time sources of funding. In 2021, we received one-time federal relief from the CARES Act for Remote Learning Grants as allocated by the Strengthening People and Revitalizing Kansas (SPARK) Committee.

In 2023, the Cabinet received an allocation of \$20 million from American Rescue Plan (ARPA) State Fiscal Recovery Fund as recommended by the SPARK Committee and approved by the State Finance Council, to expand child care capacity in the state. DCF provided a total of \$31 million from their Child Care Development Block Grant ARPA Discretionary funds, Patterson Family Foundation gifted the Cabinet \$2.5 million, and we allocated an additional \$1 million from our Preschool Development Grant to braid together funds for the Child Care Capacity Accelerator (CCCA). CCCA grantees added an estimated 5,655 new child care slots. We also received ARPA Capital Projects Fund (CPF) monies to enable construction of 10 multi-purpose community facilities that will help reduce barriers to employment, education, health, and child care.

All available funds in these programs have been granted, and there will be no further grants made absent a source of new funding. We monitor progress and provide periodic reports to the Cabinet Board.

HOW FUNDING IS DISTRIBUTED

As approved by the Legislature, the CIF annual budget includes pass-through transfers from the Cabinet to three state agencies: Kansas State Department of Education, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and Kansas Department for Children and Families. The remaining line items in the CIF are administered by the Cabinet. A portion of CIF funds are distributed through competitive grantmaking. Beginning in state fiscal year 2027, the Kansas Office of Early Childhood will oversee administration of these funds.

An established grantmaking process governs awards for CIF and all other state, federal, and private funding administered by the Cabinet (both ongoing and one-time funding authorized for limited periods). For each grant opportunity, the Cabinet adheres to a formal process to ensure consistent, fair, and compliant grantmaking. The following procedures govern how the Cabinet sets funding priorities, publicly announces opportunities, evaluates applications, authorizes grants, and monitors awards.

GRANT PROCESS OVERVIEW

The Cabinet's grantmaking process ensures compliance with rigorous federal and state funding requirements while balancing the realities of grantee capacity and needs for technical assistance. The process includes the following phases:

- Grant Program Design
- Public Request for Proposals
- Opportunity Promotion & Technical Assistance
- Application Submission
- Review & Approval
- Award & Contracting
- Monitoring & Reporting
- Closeout

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GRANT PROCESS OVERVIEW (cont'd)

GRANT PROGRAM DESIGN. The Cabinet works with funders and partners to articulate grant program goals, intended impact, and eligibility; and we ensure these address community needs revealed in the *All In For Kansas Kids Needs Assessment*. We also ensure resources are used efficiently in program design, blending or braiding funding streams as appropriate and allowable.

PUBLIC RFP. The Cabinet posts a public Request for Proposals (RFP) online to communicate expectations and encourage applicants to submit competitive proposals.

PROMOTION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. After the RFP is released publicly, an online application is made available in the Kansas CommonApp grant management platform and the opportunity is promoted through multiple channels. Technical assistance is also provided, and resources such as FAQs, helpful links, and templates are posted online.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION. All competitive grants offered through the Cabinet involve a formal application submission process—both renewal and new grants.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL. The Cabinet assembles a diverse review committee comprised of external partners, community members, and subject-matter experts. Qualified applicants are assigned to a minimum of two external reviewers from the committee. Once the external review is complete, Cabinet staff prepare a slate of recommendations for the Board that considers total funding available, reviewer feedback, geographic diversity, sustainability and viability of the projects, grantee ability to meet requirements, and prior grant compliance and performance (if applicable). The slate is presented to the Cabinet Board for discussion and vote. Upon approval, the Board authorizes Cabinet staff to administer and manage awards.

AWARD AND CONTRACTING. The Cabinet notifies successful applicants of their award and requests documents and signatures on a grant award agreement.

MONITORING AND REPORTING. Grant monitoring and reporting requirements are based on conditions of the funding source(s) and determinations by the Cabinet to ensure state and federal compliance, data-driven decisions, and evidence-based practices.

CLOSEOUT. Once the final invoice is paid, the Cabinet formally closes out grants.

EXAMPLE RFPS (viewable online)

[Early Childhood Block Grant \(ECBG\)](https://kschildrenscabinet.gov/ecbg_sfy27)

https://kschildrenscabinet.gov/ecbg_sfy27

[Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention \(CBCAP\) grants](https://kschildrenscabinet.gov/cbcap-rfp/)

<https://kschildrenscabinet.gov/cbcap-rfp/>

[Child Care Capacity Accelerator \(CCCA\)](https://allinforkansaskids.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/CCC-Accelerator-RFP.pdf) and [Innovation Community grants](https://allinforkansaskids.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Innovation-Guidelines.pdf) <https://allinforkansaskids.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/CCC-Accelerator-RFP.pdf> and <https://allinforkansaskids.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Innovation-Guidelines.pdf>

[Capital Projects Fund Accelerator \(CPF\) grants](https://allinforkansaskids.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CPF-Accelerator-RFP.pdf) <https://allinforkansaskids.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CPF-Accelerator-RFP.pdf>

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ANNUAL TIMELINE (Budgetary and CIF Accountability Processes)

MONTH	State Budget Cycle & Cabinet Recommendations	CIF Accountability Process
JULY	State Fiscal Year begins July 1, and the CIF Budget Recommendations approved by the Cabinet board in June are routed to the Director of the Kansas Office of Early Childhood for consideration in the agency budget process.	ECBG evaluation finalized and presentation to the board prepared.
AUGUST	CABINET MEETING Focus: ECBG Evaluation and Common Measures Report	
AUGUST		ECBG programs begin their reporting process.
SEPTEMBER	All state agency budgets for the upcoming fiscal year are due September 15 to Division of Budget.	ECBG program reporting continues.
OCTOBER	CABINET MEETING	
NOVEMBER	Consensus Revenue Estimates are adjusted in November. Agencies make budget appeals to the Division of the Budget in early Nov. The Governor makes final decisions in the weeks after Thanksgiving.	ECBG program reporting continues.
DECEMBER	CABINET MEETING Focus: Annual Report and Board Recommendations	
JANUARY	Legislative session begins. The Governor's Budget Recommendations are presented to the Legislature following the State of the State Address. Appropriation bills are introduced that reflect the Governor's recommendations; Legislature works on the state budget.	Develop research questions (ongoing). ECBG program reporting continues.
FEBRUARY	CABINET MEETING	
MARCH	Legislative session and budget work continues.	Synthesize program reports in March/April. Develop and field program survey in mid-March and develop interview protocol. ECBG program reporting continues.
APRIL	CABINET MEETING Focus: ECBG Grant Awards Approved	
APRIL	Master Tobacco Settlement annuity and Consensus Revenue Estimates are announced on April 20 for the coming fiscal year.	Conduct program interviews and synthesize with all other program data collected. Analyze data and begin preparing reports. ECBG program reporting continues.
MAY	Legislature finalizes the state budget. Legislative session ends.	Finalize analysis and prepare presentation to Cabinet Members. ECBG program reporting wraps up. ECBG evaluation team assesses the data.
JUNE	State Fiscal Year ends June 30. Cabinet budget recommendations for the fiscal year beginning July 1 of the following year are finalized by Board vote at the June Cabinet meeting.	CIF Accountability results delivered to Cabinet Members. Budget and other recommendations up for discussion and vote. ECBG evaluation continues.
	CABINET MEETING Focus: CIF Accountability Process Results and CIF Budget Recommendations	

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EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL

All states are required by the Federal Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007 to establish an Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) as a structured mechanism for planning and implementing early childhood policies and as a condition of receiving federal Head Start and Early Head Start funds. In February 2020, by Executive Order 20-02, the Cabinet became the designated ECAC for Kansas.

EO 20-02 also directed the Cabinet to establish a standing committee known as the Kansas Early Childhood Recommendations Panel (the Panel) to provide vision, feedback, and elevate recommendations to the Cabinet in its role as the ECAC. Membership, appointments, and terms are outlined in the Executive Order and represent the required roles in the federal legislation.

- Applications to serve on the Panel are open to the public each spring.
- The Cabinet appoints the chair and members to the Panel annually at the June meeting.
- Panel members serve one-year terms, with the option to reappoint and/or replace members by majority vote as the Cabinet sees fit.
- The Panel meets monthly in open meetings broadcast on the Cabinet's YouTube channel.

WHAT IS THE KANSAS OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD?

In April 2025, the Kansas Legislature passed House Bill 2045 with bipartisan support to unify early childhood services in Kansas. The bill creates the Kansas Office of Early Childhood (KOEC), with an operational start date of July 1, 2026. The legislation implements a recommendation made by the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force in their 2023 report highlighting system inefficiencies and navigation challenges for Kansas families. The perspectives of over 500 Kansans helped shape the goals for the KOEC, which are to:

- Unify core early childhood programs within one agency to better align and elevate the quality of these programs.
- Streamline navigation and expand access to high-quality early childhood care and education services, helping families easily get the resources and support they need.
- Increase coordination and cohesion to address access, quality, and workforce challenges.
- Build a more efficient and effective state-level system that can maximize public investments and quickly pivot resources to respond to evolving family needs.
- Center the experiences of young children and their families at the heart of this work to support early childhood development and ensure every child thrives.

The bill moves the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust to the new office (effective July 1, 2026), along with a variety of programs from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas State Department of Education, and Kansas Department for Children and Families.

It also amends K.S.A. 38-1901 and redefines the Kansas Children's Cabinet Board by amending members' terms of service and adding two new voting members and a non-voting advisory member (the Director of the Office of Early Childhood). These changes to the Kansas Children's Cabinet Board terms and composition took effect July 1, 2025.

WHAT IS THE EARLY CHILDHOOD ECOSYSTEM?

The Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem refers to the interconnected network of services, programs, policies, and state agencies that collectively support the development and well-being of young children and their families in Kansas. This ecosystem is designed to provide comprehensive programs and services from birth through age five, ensuring that children have the foundation they need for a healthy and successful future. In addition to the Kansas Office of Early Childhood, the Kansas early childhood ecosystem includes various state and local programs supported by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), and Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF), along with other statewide, regional, and local public and private partners that work to ensure that all children in the state have access to high-quality early learning experiences, health care, and family support, promoting their overall development and readiness for school.

FAQ

WHAT IS “ALL IN FOR KANSAS KIDS?”

All In For Kansas Kids (All In) is the official strategic plan and package of comprehensive early childhood initiatives aimed at optimizing our state’s early childhood ecosystem and ensuring every child thrives. Collaboration across the early childhood ecosystem among state agencies, local communities, providers, educators, and families through *All In For Kansas Kids* is key for realizing a more cohesive and effective early childhood system.

The *All In For Kansas Kids* effort serves to enhance collaboration across programs and services that support young children and their families and improve joint strategic planning.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE KEY FUND AND CIF?

The KEY Fund is a permanent endowment designed to provide stable, long-term funding for early childhood services, while the CIF is a fund that receives an annual appropriation in the state budget process from the KEY Fund for specific children's initiatives. CIF is administered through the Kansas Children’s Cabinet. Each year, the KEY fund receives our state’s annual share of Master Tobacco Settlement proceeds. While state statute directs the KPERS Board to direct investments of the KEY Fund Endowment, the Pooled Money Investment Board is currently handling these responsibilities as the ending balance of the KEY Fund is not sufficient for KPERS Board involvement (must be over \$200 million to meet KPERS investment criteria).

WHAT IS PDG?

PDG is the acronym for the Preschool Development Grant, B-5 (birth to age 5). It is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the U.S. Department of Education. It is part of a broader effort to ensure all children can access high-quality early learning experiences to prepare them for success in school and life.

The goal of PDG is to help states enhance the quality and availability of early childhood education programs and services for children from birth to age five. In Kansas, PDG funding is used to support the *All In For Kansas Kids* initiative.

WHAT IS THE KANSAS COMMON-APP?

The Kansas CommonApp is an online application system that streamlines the process for organizations to apply for grants. Early childhood programs can more effectively manage applications and awards within the CommonApp, improving overall coordination and resource allocation.

<https://commonapp.grantplatform.com>

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FAQ

WHY DO WE COLLABORATE WITH KU AND WSU ON RESEARCH AND EVALUATION?

The Cabinet is required by statute to collaborate with institutions of higher education for their experience conducting research and evaluation, and for their expertise in child development, education, and family functioning. Collaborating with the University of Kansas (KU) and Wichita State University (WSU) allows the Cabinet to leverage cutting-edge research and evidence-based practices to inform programs and policies. Universities also serve as hubs for innovation that enable the Cabinet to pilot new approaches that can improve outcomes for children and families.

Universities are well-equipped to conduct thorough evaluations and data analyses. The Cabinet benefits from these capabilities by contracting KU and WSU to measure the effectiveness of Cabinet-funded initiatives, ensuring early childhood programs and services are making a positive impact on children and families.

WHY DO WE COMPLETE AN ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS?

Kansas statute requires the Cabinet to conduct an annual assessment of CIF investments. CIF programs collect and use data as part of the CIF accountability process and to help meet performance-based budgeting requirements. The annual accountability process also allows for continuous improvement, and the findings are used to make recommendations to the governor and legislature for allocations of the fund.

WHAT IS DAISEY?

DAISEY is a secure technology platform created and managed by CPPR that supports data integration, service coordination, and impact analysis for early childhood initiatives. DAISEY is used to collect, manage, and analyze data related to early childhood programs and services funded by the CIF and CBCAP. DAISEY enables the analysis of long-term outcomes for children and families, facilitating data-driven decision-making and continuous improvement. DAISEY helps ensure that early childhood services in Kansas are delivered efficiently and effectively by:

- Reducing administrative burdens and improving the accuracy of data.
- Enhancing the capacity of agencies to provide tailored, coordinated services.
- Supporting evaluation and improvement of early childhood programs through robust data analysis.

WHY DOES THE CABINET FOCUS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD?

Investments in early childhood yield high economic returns and have profound effects on Kansas children and families. The first five years of a child's life are crucial for brain development. During this period, the brain grows rapidly, forming the neural connections that lay the foundation for cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Quality early childhood experiences have a lasting impact on a child's trajectory and future success.

- Children who receive high-quality early childhood education are better prepared for school. They tend to perform better academically, have higher graduation rates, and are more likely to pursue higher education.
- Early childhood programs that include health and nutrition services contribute to better outcomes for children. Access to proper healthcare, immunizations, and nutritious food during the early years can prevent developmental delays and chronic health issues, leading to healthier adults.
- Early childhood initiatives often include support for parents and families, such as home visiting programs and parenting education. These services empower parents with the knowledge and resources they need to provide a nurturing and stimulating environment for their children, which is critical for healthy development.
- Studies show that every dollar invested in early childhood education can save money long-term by reducing the need for remedial education, welfare support, and criminal justice services. Early intervention can also increase future earnings and economic productivity.

WHAT KIND OF EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVES DOES THE CABINET SUPPORT?

The Cabinet works to improve the health, well-being, and educational outcomes of Kansas children by funding several key early childhood and family-serving initiatives:

- **Home Visiting** - ensuring ongoing parental education, social support, and linkage with community services.
- **Early Education** - fostering early care environments that are high-quality and accessible.
- **Developmental Screening** - educating caregivers on the importance of developmental screening.
- **Maternal/Child Health** - delivering health care services for new and expectant mothers.
- **Prevention** - reducing the likelihood of child maltreatment.
- **Parent Education and Support Groups** - providing opportunities for parents and caregivers to learn and interact.
- **Mental Health** - supporting optimal mental health of children and families.

FAQ

WHAT ARE THE COMMON MEASURES?

Cabinet grantees use a HIPAA and FERPA compliant integrated data system, known as DAISEY, to report their data as part of program evaluation efforts. This information helps demonstrate the impact of services.

Grantees are not required to use all of the Common Measures, only those that are applicable to their approved grant activities. Cabinet staff and our colleagues at WSU provide technical assistance and support to all grantees to ensure they understand how to use the tools with fidelity. We also provide each grantee with an annual report on their program measures and conduct site visits several times a year to monitor progress. The menu of Common Measures is as follows:

- **ASQ-3:** Ages and Stages Questionnaire, Third Edition
- **ASQ-SE-2:** Ages and Stages Questionnaire: SE, Second Edition
- **CLASS:** Classroom Assessment Scoring System
- **DECA:** Devereux Early Childhood Assessment
- **KIPS:** Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale
- **IGDIs and myIGDIs:** Individual Growth & Development Indicators
- **PSI SF:** Parental Stress Index, 4th Edition Short Form
- **PFS-2:** Protective Factors Survey, 2nd Edition

COMMONLY USED ACRONYMS/NAMING CONVENTIONS

Cabinet – Kansas Children’s Cabinet and Trust Fund, most often abbreviated in our published work as the “Kansas Children’s Cabinet,” or “Cabinet.” “KCCTF” is generally reserved for use in federal reports and grant proposals.

CCDF – Child Care and Development Fund

CIF – Children’s Initiatives Fund

ECBG – Early Childhood Block Grant

IDEA – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Kansas Data Trust – commonly known as ECIDS in many other states, this is a shared data effort across state agencies.

KEY Fund – Kansas Endowment for Youth

MIECHV – Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program

KOEC – Office of Early Childhood

PDG B-5 – Preschool Development Grant, Birth to Age 5

QRIS – Quality Rating and Improvement System

NEW CABINET MEMBER GUIDE



Documents Incorporated in Full

- [Statutes](#)
- [Blueprint For Early Childhood](#)
- [2025 Annual Report](#)
- [2024 Strategic Plan](#)
- [2024 Needs Assessment](#)
- [Executive Order 20-02](#)
- [Kansas ECAC Recommendations for Panel Appointments, June 2025](#)
- [Slates for the most recent ECBG and CBCAP funding cycles](#)
- [Child Care Capacity Accelerator Slate and At-a-Glance](#)
- [Capital Projects Fund Slate and At-a-Glance](#)
- [Early Childhood Literacy Brief](#)

NEW CABINET MEMBER GUIDE



HOUSE BILL No. 2045

AN ACT concerning child care; relating to licensure of day care facilities, child care homes and child care centers; reducing license fees and training requirements; creating a process for a temporary waiver of certain statutory requirements; authorizing the secretary of health and environment and the director of early childhood to develop and operate pilot programs to increase child care facility availability and capacity; establishing the Kansas office of early childhood and the director of early childhood; transferring administration of day care licensing, parent education programs and the child care subsidy program to the Kansas office of early childhood; creating the day care facilities and child care resource and referral agencies licensing fee fund and the day care criminal background and fingerprinting fund; defining youth development programs; amending K.S.A.38-1901, 38-2103, 65-501, 65-504, 65-505, 65-508, 65-512, 65-527, 65-531, 72-4161, 72-4162, 72-4163, 72-4164 and 72-4166 and K.S.A. 2024 Supp. 48-3406, 65-503 and 65-516 and repealing the existing sections.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:

New Section 1. (a) Each licensed child care center that provides care to any number or type of child shall hire a program director or lead teacher who:

- (1) Is at least 18 years of age;
- (2) has a high school diploma or equivalent; and
- (3) has one of at least four educational or experience-based criteria specific to such licensure as determined by the director, which shall include one non-academic experience-based option for qualifications under this paragraph.

(b) Each licensed child care center may hire assistant teachers. Each assistant teacher shall be at least 16 years of age and have necessary skills and abilities as determined by the director. The director shall not require assistant teachers to meet educational requirements.

(c) Waivers to this section may be granted on a case-by-case basis by the secretary in accordance with section 5, and amendments thereto.

(d) On and after July 1, 2026, this section shall be administered by the director of early childhood and waivers to this section may be granted on a case-by-case basis by the director based on a recommendation from the deputy director of child care licensure and finance in accordance with section 5, and amendments thereto.

(e) From July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, this section shall be a part of and supplemental to article 5 of chapter 65 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto.

New Sec. 2. (a) (1) For each licensure year beginning after July 1, 2025, each person who provides care to children in a licensed child care home shall complete professional development training in an amount determined by the secretary of health and environment of up to 10 clock hours per licensure year.

(2) Such training shall consist of a minimum of eight hours of training specified by the secretary.

(3) As part of the professional development training required under this subsection:

(A) Each person who provides care to children in a licensed child care home shall submit to the secretary proof of completion of up to four hours of such outside training in child care or any related subject. The secretary shall retain records of such person's compliance with this requirement; and

(B) a person who maintains a licensed child care home with one provider, if such provider provides care simultaneously to four infants at any time during the licensure year, shall submit to the secretary proof of completion of at least three hours of such professional development training in an infant-specific subject. The secretary shall retain records of such person's compliance with this requirement.

(b) The secretary shall update rules and regulations to not require licensure for an individual who provides care for less than 35 hours, unless otherwise increased by the secretary, to four or fewer children, not more than two of whom may be infants who are not related to the individual by blood, marriage or legal adoption, nor to individuals who provide care for children in such child's own home or when care is arranged between friends and neighbors on an irregular basis.

(c) The secretary shall update rules and regulations regarding child

ratios on or before October 1, 2025.

(d) On and after July 1, 2026, this section shall be administered by the director of early childhood.

(e) From July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, this section shall be a part of and supplemental to article 5 of chapter 65 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto.

New Sec. 3. (a) A licensed child care center shall meet the legal requirements of the local jurisdiction where the child care center is located for fire protection, water supply and sewage disposal.

(b) (1) The designated area for children's activities shall contain a minimum of 28 square feet of floor space per child, excluding kitchens, passageways, storage areas and bathrooms.

(2) There shall be a minimum of 60 square feet of outdoor play space on the premises for each child using the space at any given time.

(c) On and after July 1, 2026, this section shall be administered by the director of early childhood.

(d) From July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026, this section shall be a part of and supplemental to article 5 of chapter 65 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto.

New Sec. 4. (a) The secretary of health and environment shall not require as a condition of licensure for a child care home that the licensee live in the child care home.

(b) On and after July 1, 2026, this section shall be administered by the director of early childhood.

(c) From July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, this section shall be a part of and supplemental to article 5 of chapter 65 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto.

New Sec. 5. (a) (1) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, a person granted licensure to maintain a day care facility may request from the secretary of health and environment a waiver from the requirements of this act for a set period of time. Waiver requests shall be made in a form and manner approved by the secretary and shall contain the provisions of the statute sought to be waived.

(2) Such waiver request shall be submitted to the secretary and may be granted on a case-by-case basis.

(b) (1) On and after July 1, 2026, notwithstanding any law to the contrary, a person granted licensure to maintain a day care facility may request a waiver from the requirements of this act for a set period of time. Waiver requests shall be made in a form and manner approved by the director of early childhood and shall contain the provisions of the statute sought to be waived.

(2) Such waiver request shall be submitted to the deputy director of child care licensure and finance. Upon a recommendation by the deputy director of child care licensure and finance on a case-by-case basis, the director may grant a waiver.

(c) From July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, this section shall be a part of and supplemental to article 5 of chapter 65 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto.

New Sec. 6. (a) (1) Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, the secretary of health and environment may develop and operate pilot programs designed to increase the availability or capacity of day care facilities in the state. Such pilot programs may request state funding for operations, subject to appropriations.

(2) The secretary may grant licensure to a person to maintain a day care facility or youth development program in a pilot program under this section that waives the requirements of this act or rules and regulations related to licensure and operation of a day care facility or youth development program, including requirements for staff at such day care facility or youth development program. A day care facility or youth development program granted a license under this section shall comply with any alternative terms, conditions and requirements set by the secretary as may be necessary to protect the health, safety and welfare of any children who attend such day care facility or youth development program.

(3) The secretary shall not grant a license under this section if the secretary determines that a day care facility or youth development program or staff of such facility or program would endanger the health, safety and welfare of any child.

(b) The secretary may grant licensure to a person to maintain a day care facility or youth development program under this section for up to five licensure years, except that the secretary may grant an additional two years of licensure to any facility or program that participated in a pilot program pursuant to subsection (c).

(c) If the secretary determines that a pilot program has been successful and will increase the availability or capacity of child care facilities in the state, the secretary shall make suggestions and recommendations to the legislature for statutory changes relating to day care facilities or youth development programs.

(d) On and after July 1, 2026, this section shall be administered by the director of early childhood.

(e) From July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, this section shall be a part of and supplemental to article 5 of chapter 65 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto.

New Sec. 7. (a) The secretary of health and environment shall not impose restrictions on the use of 15-passenger vans purchased on or before July 1, 2025.

(b) On and after July 1, 2026, this section shall be administered by the director of early childhood.

(c) From July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, this section shall be a part of and supplemental to article 5 of chapter 65 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto.

New Sec. 8. (a) There is hereby established within the executive branch the Kansas office of early childhood for the purpose of creating greater transparency, safety and efficiency to Kansans with the oversight of all funds, programs and policies related to early childhood care services provided in Kansas.

(b) The Kansas office of early childhood shall be administered under the direction and supervision of the director of early childhood.

(c) The governor shall appoint the director of early childhood, subject to confirmation by the senate as provided in K.S.A. 75-4315b, and amendments thereto. Except as provided in K.S.A. 46-2601, and amendments thereto, no person appointed as director shall exercise any power, duty or function as director until confirmed by the senate.

(d) The director shall be in the unclassified service under the Kansas civil service act and shall receive an annual salary to be fixed by the governor. The director shall serve at the pleasure of the governor.

(e) Except as provided in K.S.A. 38-2103, and amendments thereto, all budgeting, purchasing and related management functions of the Kansas office of early childhood shall be administered under the direction and supervision of the director of early childhood.

(f) All expenditures shall be made in accordance with appropriation acts upon warrants of the director of accounts and reports issued pursuant to vouchers approved by the director of early childhood or the director's designee. The director shall submit to the legislature the annual request for the Kansas office of early childhood for appropriations, including the use of moneys subject to K.S.A. 38-2102 and 38-2103, and amendments thereto. The office's request shall be prepared and submitted in the form and manner provided by K.S.A. 75-3716 and 75-3717, and amendments thereto.

(g) The Kansas governmental operations accountability law applies to the Kansas office of early childhood, and the office shall be subject to audit, review and evaluation under such law.

(h) The director shall maintain an office in Topeka, Kansas.

(i) (1) On or before July 1, 2025, the governor shall appoint an interagency transition team to begin office operations.

(2) On or before January 1, 2026:

(A) The governor shall appoint the director; and

(B) the office shall begin transitioning programs identified in section 12, and amendments thereto, from state agencies to the office.

(3) On or before July 1, 2026, all identified programs shall be under the direction and supervision of the director, including staff and other operational functions.

(j) Nothing in this act shall be construed to preempt, supersede or impinge on the authority of the Kansas department for children and families provided in K.S.A. 75-3084 through 75-3089, and amendments thereto.

New Sec. 9. (a) The Kansas office of early childhood shall be responsible for:

(1) The implementation of child care policies, processes, procedures and funding with direction from the governor, the director of early childhood and the legislature;

(2) the implementation of policies, processes and awards granted through the children's cabinet, subject to appropriations and approval of the legislature;

(3) the provision of mediation, support and problem-solving resolutions through child care advocacy services;

(4) providing easily-accessible support to the public and persons providing and receiving child care services;

(5) ensuring access to information, services, resolution of issues, rules and regulations and funding in a user-friendly manner as prescribed by the director;

(6) serving as a central point of contact for federal and state agencies on child care services, funding and grants; and

(7) maximizing administrative efficiencies to reduce burdens on families and improve access to early childhood services.

(b) The director of early childhood shall ensure efficient use of funds for the provision of child care services and report such efficient use through the following:

(1) Maximizing funds for child care services, support programs and grant initiatives for efficiency and reducing administrative waste, fraud and abuse and ensuring greatest possible benefit to eligible families and providers;

(2) establishing clear performance metrics and accountability measures to ensure effective use of state and federal resources, including conducting regular audits, outcome-based evaluations and cost-efficiency reviews; and

(3) complying with all rules and regulations adopted pursuant to the requirements set forth in K.S.A. 39-709, and amendments thereto.

(c) On or before January 20, 2026, and each year thereafter, the director shall submit a report to the Kansas legislature that includes:

(1) The allocation and expenditure of funds and resources;

(2) measurable outcomes of programs funded through the office, including, but not limited to, compliance to safety regulations and number of complaints received and resolved;

(3) identified inefficiencies within the office and system and the corrective action taken in response;

(4) recommendations for improving fiscal stewardship, service delivery, implementation of statutory requirement and any potential changes;

(5) updates on changes to rules and regulations;

(6) all data and metrics related to service rates for children and families, workforce and private actors, service delivery and fiscal efficiency of all programs and recommendations for continuation or termination of such programs; and

(7) any pilot program, including, but not limited to, the number of participating day care facilities or youth development programs and number of children attending such facilities or programs, provisions of statutes and regulations waived by the director, recommendations for changes to this act and a summary of findings from the pilot program based on available information.

New Sec. 10. (a) The director of early childhood shall:

(1) Prepare, submit to the legislature and implement plans for a comprehensive service delivery system for children and families;

(2) facilitate and coordinate interagency cooperation toward the goal of serving children and families with a variety of other state agencies, such as the Kansas department for children and families, the department of health and environment, the department of corrections, the state board of education, the state board of regents and any other state offices, department or board providing services to Kansas children and families;

(3) provide a central contact for information and assistance for children, families, communities and businesses in need of early childhood care and related services;

(4) serve as the primary contact for the Kansas legislature on policy, administrative support and constituent services relating to early childhood care and related services;

(5) enter into such contracts and agreements as necessary or incidental to the performance of the powers and duties of the executive director;

(6) charge and collect, by order, a fee necessary for the administration and processing of paper documents, including, but not limited to, applications, registrations, permits, licenses, certifications, renewals, reports and remittance of fees that are necessary or incidental to the execution of the laws relating to the Kansas office of early childhood;

(7) appoint and oversee deputy directors within the office;

(8) transition the administration of the following programs and state functions to the office:

(A) Child care subsidy;

(B) children's cabinet and trust fund;

(C) day care facility licensing, youth development programs, school-age programs and early youth care programs;

(D) child care quality;

(E) head start collaboration office;

(F) healthy families America;

(G) Kansas early head start child care partnership;

(H) Kansas early head start home visitation;

(I) maternal and child health home visitation;

(J) maternal, infant and early childhood home visitation; and

(K) parents as teachers;

(9) enter into agreements with the secretary of administration for the provision of shared services, including, but not limited to, personnel and other administrative services for the office;

(10) adopt, amend or revoke any rules and regulations necessary to carry out this act and the programs and duties of the office; and

(11) ensure that all Kansas children's cabinet functions are executed in accordance with K.S.A. 38-1901, and amendments thereto.

(b) The director shall not adopt rules and regulations or policies requiring educational outcomes or curriculum for persons or entities licensed pursuant to this act.

(c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize the director to administer the preschool programs in K.S.A. 72-3215 and 72-5154, and amendments thereto.

(d) Subject to this act, the director shall organize the Kansas office of early childhood in the manner that the director deems most efficient. The director may establish policies governing the transaction of business of the office and the administration of each division within the office. The deputy directors shall perform such duties and exercise such powers as the director may prescribe and such duties and powers as are prescribed by law. Such deputy directors shall act for and exercise the powers of the director to the extent that authority to do so is delegated by the director.

(e) Administration of programs transferred by this section are subject to federal and state appropriations.

New Sec. 11. (a) Except as otherwise provided by law, and subject

to the Kansas civil service act, the director shall appoint:

(1) Subordinate officers and employees as are necessary to enable the director to exercise or perform the functions, powers and duties pursuant to this act;

(2) the deputy director of child care licensure and finance;

(3) the deputy director of home visitation; and

(4) the deputy director of the Kansas children's cabinet.

(b) Nothing in this section shall be construed to affect the status, rights or benefits of civil service accrued or vested in any employee of the Kansas children's cabinet, the Kansas department for children and families, the department for health and environment or the state department of education.

New Sec. 12. (a) (1) There is hereby established within and as a part of the Kansas office of early childhood the deputy director of child care licensure and finance. The deputy director shall oversee day care licensure, including, day care facility and child care resource and referral agency licensing and child care finance and quality.

(2) The deputy director shall be in the unclassified service under the Kansas civil service act and appointed by the director.

(3) All of the powers, duties and functions of the existing day care and child care resource and referral agency licensing programs pursuant to this act within the division of public health of the department of health and environment are hereby transferred to the deputy director.

(4) The deputy director shall manage all components of licensure, including, but not limited to, inspections, waiver approvals and revocation of licenses.

(5) Whenever day care and child care resource and referral agency licensing, or words of like effect, are referred to or designated by any statute, rule and regulation, contract or any other document, including any statute, rule and regulation, contract or any document created pursuant to the authorities transferred by this section, such reference or designation shall apply to the deputy director.

(6) The deputy director may enter into agreements with the Kansas department for children and families for the administration of child care subsidy payments. If executed, such agreements shall require that the secretary for children and families determine an applicant's eligibility for the child care subsidy according to K.S.A. 39-709, and amendments thereto, and provide information pertaining to such eligible applicants to the deputy director for the administration of such benefits.

(7) There is hereby established the child care ombudsman to be overseen by the deputy director of child care licensing and finance. Such ombudsman shall:

(A) Serve as a central point of contact for concerns regarding the delivery and system of child care services and receive, investigate and address complaints, concerns and inquiries in a timely manner from the public regarding child care services, providers and related programs;

(B) act as an advocate for parents, families and child care providers by facilitating communication between stakeholders and ensuring that concerns are resolved efficiently and fairly;

(C) work collaboratively with state agencies, the director of early childhood, service providers and advocacy organizations to improve the quality, accessibility and affordability of child care services in Kansas;

(D) provide clear guidance and information, in conjunction with and direction from the director, to the public about child care regulations, available support programs and how to access services when concerns arise;

(E) submit an annual report to the director, to be shared with the legislature, detailing the number and nature of concerns addressed, actions taken and recommendations for improvements in child care services and policies;

(F) review all revocations of licensure upon a complaint and make appeal to director. If an unsatisfactory determination is made, the provider may appeal through the administrative procedure act; and

(G) recommend changes in policies, rules and regulations or procedures to improve the functioning of child care services in Kansas to the director, the governor and the legislature.

(b) (1) There is hereby established within and as a part of the Kansas office of early childhood the deputy director of home visitation. The deputy director shall oversee home visitation programs.

(2) The deputy director shall be in the unclassified service under the Kansas civil services act and appointed by the director.

(3) All the powers, duties and functions of existing home visitation programs are hereby transferred to the deputy director of home visitation.

(4) Whenever the existing home visitation programs or word of like effect, are referred to or designated by any statute, rule and regulation, contract or any other document, including any statute, rule and regulation, contract or any document created pursuant to the authorities transferred by this section, such reference or designation shall apply to the deputy director.

(c) (1) There is hereby established within and as a part of the Kansas office of early childhood the deputy director of the Kansas children's cabinet established under K.S.A. 38-1901, and amendments thereto.

(2) The Kansas children's cabinet shall be administered by the deputy director of the Kansas children's cabinet, who shall be in the unclassified service under the Kansas civil service act and appointed by the director.

(3) All of the powers, duties, functions and cabinet-approved programs of the existing Kansas children's cabinet and the Kansas children's cabinet director are hereby transferred to the Kansas office of early childhood.

(4) The children's cabinet established in K.S.A. 38-1901, and amendments thereto, is subject to appropriations of the legislature.

New Sec. 13. (a) On or before July 1, 2026, except as otherwise provided by this act, all rules and regulations, orders and directives of state agencies related to the programs transferred by this act that are in effect on the effective date of this act shall continue to be effective and shall be deemed to be rules and regulations, orders and directives of the Kansas office of early childhood until revised, amended, revoked or nullified pursuant to law.

(b) (1) On or before July 1, 2026, the balances of all funds and accounts appropriated or reappropriated that were used for or pertain to the powers, duties and functions of programs transferred to the Kansas office of early childhood pursuant to this act are hereby transferred within the state treasury to the Kansas office of early childhood and shall be used for the purpose for which the appropriation was originally made. The director of Kansas office of early childhood shall determine and certify to the director of accounts and reports the amount in each account of the state general fund or special revenue fund of state agencies that have been determined by the director of the Kansas office of early childhood to be transferred. Upon receipt of a certification pursuant to this paragraph, the director of accounts and reports shall transfer the amount certified pursuant to this paragraph from each account of the state general fund or special revenue fund of a state agency that has been determined by the director of the Kansas office of early childhood to be transferred.

(2) On or before July 1, 2026, the Kansas office of early childhood shall succeed to all property, property rights and records of state agencies that were used for or pertain to the powers, duties and functions of the programs transferred to the Kansas office of early childhood pursuant to this act.

(3) On or before July 1, 2026, any conflict as to the proper disposition of the unexpended balance of any appropriation, property, property rights, personnel or records as a result of the transfer of programs to the Kansas office of early childhood pursuant to this act arising under this subsection shall be determined by the governor.

(c) (1) On or after July 1, 2026, no suit, action or other proceeding, judicial or administrative, lawfully commenced or that could have been commenced by or against any state agency or program mentioned in this act or by or against any officer of the state in such officer's official duties shall abate by reason of this act. The court may allow any such suit, action or other proceeding to be maintained by or against the successor of any such state agency or any officer affected.

(2) On or after July 1, 2026, no criminal action commenced or that could have been commenced by the state shall abate by the taking effect of this act.

(d) (1) On or before July 1, 2026, all officers and employees of the state agencies related to the programs transferred in this act who, immediately prior to the effective date of this act, are engaged in the exercise and performance of the powers, duties and functions transferred by this act, as well as all officers and employees of the state agencies related to the programs transferred in this act who are determined by the director of the Kansas office of early childhood to be engaged in providing administrative, technical or other support services that are essential to the exercise and performance of the powers, duties and functions transferred by this act, are hereby transferred to the Kansas office of early childhood. All classified officers and employees so transferred shall retain their status as classified employees.

(2) On or before July 1, 2026, officers and employees transferred by this act shall retain all retirement benefits and leave balances and rights that had accrued or vested prior to the date of transfer. The service of each such officer or employee so transferred shall be deemed to have been continuous. Any subsequent transfers, layoffs or abolition of classified service positions under the Kansas civil service act shall be made in accordance with the civil service laws and any rules and regulations adopted thereunder. Nothing in this act shall affect the classified status of any transferred person employed prior to the date of this transfer.

(3) On or before July 1, 2026, notwithstanding the effective date of this act, the provisions of this act prescribing the transfer of officers and employees to the Kansas office of early childhood established by this act, the date of transfer of each such officer or employee shall commence at the start of a payroll period.

New Sec. 14. (a) To the extent that funds expended for child care services are subject to federal requirements and appropriation acts of the legislature, such funds shall not be expended by any agency or office to reimburse providers for unfilled child care slots, not including reimbursement for a child who is temporarily absent due to illness or other reason and intend to resume receiving child care services.

(b) On and after July 1, 2026, this section shall be administered by the director of early childhood.

(c) From July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, this section shall be a part of and supplemental to article 5 of chapter 65 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto.

New Sec. 15. (a) It shall be unlawful for any person, firm, corporation or association to conduct or maintain a day care facility for children under 16 years of age without having a license or temporary permit therefor from the executive director of the Kansas office of early childhood. Nothing in this act shall apply to:

(1) A residential facility or hospital that is operated and maintained by a state agency as defined in K.S.A. 75-3701, and amendments thereto;

(2) child care facilities as defined in K.S.A. 65-503, and amendments thereto;

(3) a summer instructional camp that is provided by a not-for-profit, school, verifiable nonpublic school or an employee of such school; or

(4) a person or group of persons providing educational activities for children ages pre-K through high school to such persons' children.

(b) Organizations or persons providing services defined as a day

care under this act and not included in this section may apply for and be granted a waiver as provided for under the act.

(c) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 16. (a) As used in this act:

(1) "Act" means sections 8 through 36, and amendments thereto.

(2) "Assistant teacher" means a staff member of a child care center who is responsible for assisting the lead teacher in the care of children.

(3) "Child care center" means a facility that meets child care center regulations and provides care and educational activities for children.

(4) "Child care home" means the premises where care is provided for children at a residence.

(5) "Child care resource and referral agency" means a business or service conducted, maintained or operated by a person engaged in providing resource and referral services, including information on specific services provided by child care facilities, to assist parents to find child care.

(6) "Day care facility" means a day care home, preschool, child care center, school-age program, youth development program or other facility of a type determined by the director to require regulation under this act.

(7) "Employee" means a person working, regularly volunteering or residing in a day care facility.

(8) "Infant" means a child who is between two weeks and 12 months of age or a child older than 12 months who has not yet learned to walk.

(9) "Lead teacher" means an individual who can independently staff any unit in a child care center.

(10) "Licensure year" means the period of time beginning on the effective date and ending on the expiration date of a license.

(11) "Person" means any individual, association, partnership, corporation, government, governmental subdivision or other entity.

(12) "Program director" means the staff member of a child care center is responsible for implementing and supervising the comprehensive and coordinated plan of activities that provide for the education, care, protection and development of children who attend a child care center.

(13) "Religious beliefs" means the same as defined in K.S.A. 44-663, and amendments thereto.

(14) "School-age" means a child who will be at least six years of age on or before the first day of September of any school year but is under 16 years of age.

(15) "Unit" means the number of children who may be present in one group in a child care center.

(16) "Youth development program" means the same as defined in section 32, and amendments thereto.

(b) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 17. (a) The director of the Kansas office of early childhood shall have the power to grant a license to a person to maintain a day care facility for children under 16 years of age. A license granted to maintain a day care facility shall state the name of the licensee, describe the particular premises in or at which the business shall be carried on, whether it shall receive and care for children, and the number of children that may be cared for at any one time. No greater number of children than is authorized in the license shall be kept on such premises, and the business shall not be carried on in a building or place not designated in the license. The license shall be kept posted in a conspicuous place on such premises, where the business is conducted. A license granted to maintain a day care facility shall have on its face an expiration sticker stating the date of expiration of the license.

(b) The director of the Kansas office of early childhood shall not grant a license in any case until careful inspection of the day care facility has been made according to the terms of this act and until such

day care facility has complied with all the requirements of this act. The director of the Kansas office of early childhood may issue a temporary permit to operate for a period of not to exceed 90 days upon receipt of an initial application for license. The director of the Kansas office of early childhood may extend the temporary permit to operate for an additional period of not to exceed 90 days if an applicant is not in full compliance with this act but has made efforts toward full compliance.

(c) (1) In all cases where the secretary for children and families deems it necessary, an investigation of the day care facility shall be made under the supervision of the secretary for children and families or other designated qualified agents. For that purpose and for any subsequent investigations, such agents shall have the right of entry and access to the premises of the facility and to any information deemed necessary for the completion of the investigation. In all cases where an investigation is made, a report of the investigation of such facility shall be filed with the director of the Kansas office of early childhood.

(2) In cases where neither approval nor disapproval can be given within a period of 30 days following a formal request for such a study, the director of the Kansas office of early childhood may issue a temporary license without a fee, pending final approval or disapproval of the center or facility.

(d) Whenever the director of the Kansas office of early childhood refuses to grant a license to an applicant, the director of the Kansas office of early childhood shall issue an order to that effect, stating the reasons for such denial and, within five days after the issuance of such order, notify the applicant of the refusal. Upon application and not more than 15 days after the date of issuance of such order, a hearing on the order shall be held in accordance with the Kansas administrative procedure act.

(e) When the director of the Kansas office of early childhood finds, upon investigation or is advised by the secretary for children and families, that K.S.A. 59-2123, and amendments thereto, or this act are being violated or the day care facility is maintained without due regard to the health, safety or welfare of any child, the director of the Kansas office of early childhood may issue an order revoking such license after giving notice and the opportunity for a hearing in accordance with the Kansas administrative procedure act. Such order shall clearly state the reason for the revocation.

(f) If the director revokes or refuses to renew a license, the licensee who had a license revoked or not renewed shall not be eligible to apply for a license for a period of one year subsequent to the date such revocation or refusal to renew becomes final. If the director revokes or refuses to renew a license of a licensee who is a repeat violator for three or more times of statutory requirements or rules and regulations or is found to have contributed to the death or serious bodily harm of a child under such licensee's care, such licensee shall be permanently prohibited from applying for a new license to provide child care or from seeking employment under another licensee.

(g) Any applicant or licensee aggrieved by a final order of the director of the Kansas office of early childhood denying or revoking a license under this act may appeal the order in accordance with the Kansas judicial review act.

(h) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 18. (a) The annual fee for a license to conduct a day care facility or child care resource and referral agency shall be fixed by the director of the Kansas office of early childhood by rules and regulations in an amount not to exceed the following:

(1) For a child care resource and referral agency, \$150; and

(2) for any day care facility subject to this act, there shall be no annual fee for a license to conduct a day care facility.

(b) The license fee shall be paid to the director of the Kansas office of early childhood when the license is applied for and annually thereafter. The fee shall not be refundable. Fees in effect under subsection (a) immediately prior to July 1, 2026, shall continue in

effect on and after July 1, 2026, until a different fee is established by the director of the Kansas office of early childhood by rules and regulations.

(c) Any licensee who fails to renew such license within 30 days after the expiration of the license shall pay to the director the renewal fee plus a late fee in an amount of \$75 or an amount equal to the fee for the renewal of a license, whichever is greater.

(d) Any licensee applying for an amended license shall pay to the director of the Kansas office of early childhood a fee established by rules and regulations of the director in an amount of not to exceed \$35.

(e) There is hereby created the day care facilities and child care resource and referral agencies licensing fee fund. The director of the Kansas office of early childhood shall remit all moneys received by the director from fees under this section to the state treasurer in accordance with K.S.A. 75-4215, and amendments thereto. Upon receipt of each such remittance, the state treasurer, notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, shall deposit the entire amount in the state treasury to the credit of the day care facilities and child care resource and referral agencies licensing fee fund. All expenditures from the day care facilities and child care resource and referral agencies licensing fee fund shall be made only for the purposes of this act in accordance with appropriation acts upon warrants of the director of accounts and reports issued pursuant to vouchers approved by the director of the Kansas office of early childhood or by the director's designee. Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, no moneys shall be transferred or otherwise revert from this fund to the state general fund by appropriation act or other act of the legislature. Moneys available under this section by the creation of the day care facilities or child care resource and referral agencies licensing fee fund shall not be substituted for or used to reduce or eliminate moneys available to the Kansas office of early childhood to administer this act. Nothing in this act shall be construed to authorize a reduction or elimination of moneys made available by the state to local units of government for the purposes of this act.

(f) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 19. (a) The director of the Kansas office of early childhood shall serve notice of the issuance, limitation, modification, suspension or revocation of a license to conduct a day care facility to the secretary for children and families, the secretary of corrections, state department of education, office of the state fire marshal, county, city-county or multi-county department of health and any licensed child placement agency or licensed child care resource and referral agency serving the area where the facility is located. A day care facility or child care resource and referral agency that has had a license limited, modified, suspended, revoked or denied by the director of the Kansas office of early childhood shall notify in writing the parents or guardians of the enrollees of the limitation, modification, suspension, revocation or denial. Neither the secretary for children and families nor any other person shall place or cause to be placed any child under 16 years of age in any day care facility or child care resource and referral agency that is not licensed by the director of the Kansas office of early childhood.

(b) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 20. (a) Each day care facility licensee shall keep a record upon forms prescribed and provided by the director of the Kansas office of early childhood. Such record shall include the name and age of each child received and cared for in the facility together with the names and addresses of the parents or guardians of such children and such other information as the director of the Kansas office of early childhood may require. Each day care facility licensee shall apply to and shall receive without charge from the director of the Kansas office of early childhood forms for such records as may be required. Such forms shall contain a copy of this act.

(b) (1) Information obtained under this section shall be confidential and shall not be made public in a manner that would

identify an individual.

(2) Such records shall be confidential and shall not be subject to the open records act, K.S.A. 45-215 et seq., and amendments thereto. This subsection shall expire on July 1, 2031, unless the legislature reviews and reenacts this provision pursuant to K.S.A. 45-229, and amendments thereto, prior to July 1, 2031.

(c) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 21. (a) Each day care facility subject to this act shall:

(1) Be properly heated, plumbed, lighted and ventilated;

(2) have plumbing, water and sewerage systems that conform to all applicable state and local laws; and

(3) be operated with strict regard to the health, safety and welfare of each child.

(b) (1) Every day care facility shall furnish or cause to be furnished for the use of each child and employee an individual towel, washcloth or disposable towel, comb, individual drinking cup or sanitary bubbling fountain and toothbrushes for all children other than infants, and keep or require such articles to be kept at all times in a clean and sanitary condition.

(2) Toothbrushes in a day care facility may be used after meals or as appropriate.

(3) Every day care facility or child care resource and referral agency shall comply with all applicable fire codes and rules and regulations of the state fire marshal.

(c) The director of the Kansas office of early childhood shall develop and adopt rules and regulations for the operation and maintenance of day care facilities. The rules and regulations for operating and maintaining day care facilities shall be designed to promote the health, safety and welfare of any child served in such facilities by ensuring safe and adequate physical surroundings, healthful food, adequate handwashing, safe storage of toxic substances and hazardous chemicals, sanitary diapering and toileting, home sanitation, supervision and care of the residents by capable, qualified persons of sufficient number, after-hour care, an adequate program of activities and services, sudden infant death syndrome and safe sleep practices training, prohibition on corporal punishment, crib safety, protection from electrical hazards, protection from swimming pools and other water sources, fire drills, emergency plans, safety of outdoor playground surfaces, door locks, safety gates and transportation and such appropriate parental participation as may be feasible under the circumstances.

(d) In addition to any rules and regulations adopted under this section for safe sleep practices, a day care facility shall ensure that all of the following requirements are met for children under 12 months of age:

(1) A child shall only be placed to sleep on a surface and in an area that has been approved for use as such by the director of the Kansas office of early childhood;

(2) the sleep surface shall be free from soft or loose bedding, including, but not limited to, blankets, bumpers and pillows; and

(3) the sleep surface shall be free from toys, including mobiles and other types of play equipment or devices.

(e) A day care facility shall ensure that children over 12 months of age only be placed to sleep on a surface and in an area that has been approved for use as such by the director of the Kansas office of early childhood.

(f) The director of the Kansas office of early childhood may exercise discretion to make exceptions to requirements in subsections (d) and (e) where special health needs exist.

(g) Each child cared for in a day care facility, including children of the person maintaining the facility, shall be required to have current immunizations as the secretary of health and environment considers necessary. The person maintaining a day care facility shall maintain a record of each child's immunizations and provide to the secretary of

health and environment and the director of the Kansas office of early childhood such information relating thereto, in accordance with rules and regulations of the secretary of health and environment and director, except that the person maintaining a day care facility shall not have such person's license revoked solely for the failure to have or maintain the immunization records required by this subsection.

(h) The immunization requirement of subsection (g) shall not apply if one of the following is obtained:

(1) Certification from a licensed physician stating that the physical condition of the child is such that immunization would endanger the child's life or health; or

(2) a written statement signed by the child's parent or guardian that such immunization violates sincerely held religious beliefs of the parent or guardian.

(i) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 22. (a) It shall be unlawful for any day care facility to receive or care for any adult except as authorized by rules and regulations adopted by the director of the Kansas office of early childhood.

(b) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 23. (a) It is hereby made the duty of the director of the Kansas office of early childhood to inspect or cause to be inspected on or after July 1, 2026, and once every 12 months thereafter, every day care facility, unless otherwise provided in subsection (b). For the purpose of inspection, the director or the director's authorized agent, as an employee of the director or who has a contract with the director to provide inspections pursuant to this act and who holds a certificate issued pursuant to subsection (c), shall have the right of entry and access to every department and every place in the premises, to call for and examine the records that are required to be kept according to this act and to make and preserve a record of every inspection. The licensee shall give all reasonable information to the authorized agent of the director of the Kansas office of early childhood and afford every reasonable facility for viewing the premises and seeing the children therein. No such child, without the consent of the child's parent, shall be required to be interviewed by any agent.

(b) The director of the Kansas office of early childhood shall conduct an inspection of any day care facility upon receiving a complaint. Any new day care facility shall be inspected prior to issuance of a license. The director may conduct an inspection of any day care facility that has a record of repeated complaints or serious violations at any time. Every 12 months, the director or authorized agent of the director shall inspect any day care facility that provides services to military families receiving military assistance for child care.

(c) (1) The director shall create a surveyor certification and provide a minimum of yearly continuing education to qualify for such certification.

(2) If a surveyor fails to comply with the certification requirements established by the director pursuant to paragraph (1), the director may require such surveyor to complete an improvement plan.

(3) If such surveyor does not satisfactorily complete the improvement plan, the director may terminate such surveyor's current certification.

(d) Persons conducting inspections and surveys pursuant to this act shall hold a certification issued by the director.

(e) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 24. (a) Whenever an authorized agent of the director of the Kansas office of early childhood or the secretary for children and families finds a day care facility that is not being conducted according to law, it shall be the duty of such agent to notify the licensee in writing of changes or alterations as such agent determines is necessary in order to comply with the requirements of the law, and such agent shall file a copy of such notice with the director of the Kansas office of early childhood. It shall thereupon be the duty of the licensee to make such

changes or alterations as are contained in the written notice within five days from the receipt of such notice. Notice shall be given in accordance with the Kansas administrative procedure act.

(b) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 25. (a) Any person, firm, corporation or association that violates this act shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, shall be fined not less than \$5 but not more than \$50. Each and every day that the person fails or refuses to comply with such provisions shall be deemed a separate offense under this act. If, for 30 days after any final conviction for such violation or revocation of license, the person still fails or refuses to comply with the orders in the notice under section 24, and amendments thereto, upon notice and opportunity for a hearing in accordance with the Kansas administrative procedure act, the building or premises where such day care facility is conducted may be closed until such person has complied with this act.

(b) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 26. (a) Upon complaint of any authorized agent of the director of the Kansas office of early childhood, the county or district attorney in the appropriate jurisdiction is hereby authorized and required to file a complaint and prosecute to the final determination all actions or proceedings against any person under this act.

(b) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 27. (a) No person shall knowingly maintain a day care facility if an employee in this state or in other states or the federal government:

(1) (A) Has been convicted of a crime that is classified as a person felony under the Kansas criminal code;

(B) has been convicted of a felony under K.S.A. 2010 Supp. 21-36a01 through 21-36a17, prior to their transfer, or article 57 of chapter 21 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto, or any felony violation of any provision of the uniform controlled substances act prior to July 1, 2009;

(C) has been convicted of any act that is described in articles 34, 35 or 36 of chapter 21 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, prior to their repeal, or article 54, 55 or 56 of chapter 21 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto, or K.S.A. 21-6104, 21-6325, 21-6326, 21-6418 through 21-6422 or 21-6424, and amendments thereto, or been convicted of an attempt under K.S.A. 21-3301, prior to its repeal, or K.S.A. 21-5301, and amendments thereto, to commit any such act or been convicted of conspiracy under K.S.A. 21-3302, prior to its repeal, or K.S.A. 21-5302, and amendments thereto, to commit such act, or similar statutes of any other state or the federal government;

(D) has been convicted of any act that is described in K.S.A. 21-4301 or 21-4301a, prior to their repeal, or K.S.A. 21-6401, and amendments thereto, or similar statutes of any other state or the federal government; or

(E) has been convicted of any act that is described in K.S.A. 21-3718 or 21-3719, prior to their repeal, or K.S.A. 21-5812, and amendments thereto, or similar statutes of any other state or the federal government;

(2) except as provided in subsection (b), has been adjudicated a juvenile offender because of having committed an act which, if committed by an adult, would constitute the commission of a felony and that is a crime against persons, is any act described in articles 34, 35 or 36 of chapter 21 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, prior to their repeal, or article 54, 55 or 56 of chapter 21 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto, or K.S.A. 21-6104, 21-6325, 21-6326, 21-6418 through 21-6422 or 21-6424, and amendments thereto, or similar statutes of any other state or the federal government, or is any act described in K.S.A. 21-4301 or 21-4301a, prior to their repeal, or K.S.A. 21-6401, and amendments thereto, or similar statutes of any other state or the federal government;

(3) has been convicted or adjudicated of a crime that requires

registration as a sex offender under the Kansas offender registration act, K.S.A. 22-4901 et seq., and amendments thereto, as a sex offender in any other state or on the national sex offender registry;

(4) has committed an act of physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect or sexual abuse and is listed in the child abuse and neglect registry maintained by the Kansas department for children and families pursuant to K.S.A. 38-2226, and amendments thereto, or any similar child abuse and neglect registries maintained by any other state or the federal government and:

(A) Has failed to successfully complete a corrective action plan that has been deemed appropriate and approved by the Kansas department for children and families or requirements of similar entities in any other state or the federal government; or

(B) such person's record has not been expunged;

(5) has had a child removed from the home based on a court order pursuant to K.S.A. 38-2251, and amendments thereto, in this state, or a court order from any other state based upon a similar statute that finds the child to be deprived or a child in need of care based on a finding of physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect or sexual abuse and the child has not been returned to the home or the child has reached the age of majority before being returned to the home and such person has failed to satisfactorily complete a corrective action plan approved by the department of health and environment;

(6) has had parental rights terminated pursuant to the revised Kansas code for care of children, or a similar statute of other states;

(7) has signed a diversion agreement pursuant to K.S.A. 22-2906 et seq., and amendments thereto, or an immediate intervention agreement pursuant to K.S.A. 38-2346, and amendments thereto, involving a charge of child abuse or a sexual offense; or

(8) has an infectious or contagious disease.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions in subsection (a), no person shall maintain a day care facility if such person has been found to be a person in need of a guardian or a conservator, or both, as provided in K.S.A. 59-3050 through 59-3095, and amendments thereto.

(c) Any person who resides in a day care facility and who has been found to be in need of a guardian or a conservator, or both, shall be counted in the total number of children allowed in care.

(d) In accordance with this subsection, the director of the Kansas office of early childhood shall have access to any court orders or adjudications of any court of record, any records of such orders or adjudications, criminal history record information, including, but not limited to, diversion agreements in the possession of the Kansas bureau of investigation and any report of investigations as authorized by K.S.A. 38-2226, and amendments thereto, or the Kansas department for children and families or court of this state concerning employees in a day care facility. The director shall have access to these records for the purpose of determining whether or not the home meets the requirements of this section, K.S.A. 59-2132, and amendments thereto, and sections 16 and 21, and amendments thereto.

(e) In accordance with this subsection, the director is authorized to conduct national criminal history record checks to determine criminal history on employees in a day care facility. In order to conduct a national criminal history check, the director shall require fingerprinting for identification and determination of criminal history in accordance with K.S.A. 22-4714, and amendments thereto.

(f) (1) The director of the Kansas office of early childhood shall adopt rules and regulations to fix a fee for fingerprinting employees in a day care facility, as may be required by the Kansas office of early childhood to reimburse the Kansas office of early childhood for the cost of the fingerprinting.

(2) The director shall remit all moneys received from the fees established under this section to the state treasurer in accordance with K.S.A. 72-4215, and amendments thereto. Upon receipt of each such remittance, the state treasurer shall deposit the entire amount in the

state treasury to the credit of the day care criminal background and fingerprinting fund.

(g) The day care criminal background and fingerprinting fund is hereby created in the state treasury to be administered by the director of the Kansas office of early childhood. All moneys credited to the day care criminal background and fingerprinting fund shall be used to pay local and state law enforcement officers and agencies for the processing of fingerprints and criminal history background checks for the Kansas office of early childhood. All expenditures from the day care criminal background and fingerprinting fund shall be made in accordance with appropriation acts upon warrants of the director of accounts and reports issued pursuant to vouchers approved by the director or the director's designee.

(h) The director shall notify the day care applicant or licensee within seven days by certified mail, with return receipt requested, when the result of the national criminal history record check or other appropriate review reveals unfitness specified in subsection (a)(1) through (a)(8) of the person who is the subject of the review.

(i) No day care facility or the employees thereof shall be liable for civil damages to any person who is refused employment or discharged from employment by reason of such facility's compliance with this section, if such facility acts in good faith to comply with this section.

(j) For the purpose of subsection (a)(3), a person listed in the child abuse and neglect central registry shall not be prohibited from being an employee in a day care facility unless such person has:

(1) Had an opportunity to be interviewed and present information during the investigation of the alleged act of abuse or neglect; and

(2) been given notice of the agency decision and an opportunity to appeal such decision to the director and to the courts pursuant to the Kansas judicial review act.

(k) No person shall maintain a day care facility unless such person is a high school graduate or the equivalent thereof, except that, if extraordinary circumstances exist, the director of the Kansas office of early childhood may exercise discretion to make exceptions from this requirement. This subsection shall not apply to any person who was maintaining a day care facility on the day immediately prior to July 1, 2010.

(l) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 28. (a) The director may limit, modify or suspend any license or temporary permit issued under sections 15 through 27, and amendments thereto, upon any of the following grounds and in the manner provided in this act:

(1) Violation by the licensee or holder of a temporary permit of any provision of this act, or of the rules and regulations promulgated under this act;

(2) aiding, abetting or permitting the violation of any provision of this act or of the rules and regulations promulgated under this act;

(3) conduct in the operation or maintenance, or both the operation and maintenance, of a day care facility that is inimical to the health, safety or welfare of any child receiving services from such day care facility or to the public;

(4) the conviction of a licensee or holder of a temporary permit, at any time during licensure or during the time that the temporary permit is in effect, of crimes as defined in section 27, and amendments thereto; and

(5) a third or subsequent violation by the licensee or holder of a temporary permit of section 34(b), and amendments thereto.

(b) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 29. (a) The director may limit, modify or suspend any license or temporary permit issued under sections 15 through 27, and amendments thereto, prior to any hearing when, in the opinion of the director, the action is necessary to protect any child in the day care facility from physical or mental abuse, abandonment or any other substantial threat to health, safety or welfare. Administrative

proceedings under this section shall be conducted in accordance with the emergency adjudicative proceedings of the Kansas administrative procedure act and in accordance with other relevant provisions of the Kansas administrative procedure act.

(b) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 30. (a) Records in the possession of the director of early childhood or such director's agents regarding day care facilities shall not be released publicly in a manner that would identify individuals, except that individual names of licensees, applicants, facilities and day care facilities may be released. Nothing in this section prohibits the release of any information as required by law.

(b) Records in the possession of the director of early childhood or such director's agents regarding day care facilities may be released to:

(1) An agency or organization authorized to receive notice under section 19, and amendments thereto;

(2) any local, state or federal governmental entity or subdivision thereof;

(3) any child and adult care food program sponsoring agency; or

(4) any disaster or emergency entity.

(c) The director of the Kansas office of early childhood shall prohibit the release of the name, address and telephone number of a day care facility if the director determines that prohibition of the release of the information is necessary to protect the health, safety or welfare of the public or the children enrolled in the day care facility.

(d) Any records under subsection (a), (b) or (c) shall be available to any member of the standing committee on appropriations of the house of representatives or the standing committee on ways and means of the senate carrying out such member's or committee's official functions in accordance with K.S.A. 75-4319, and amendments thereto, in a closed or executive meeting. Except in limited conditions established by $\frac{2}{3}$ of the members of such committee, records received by the committee shall not be further disclosed. Unauthorized disclosure may subject such member to discipline or censure from the house of representatives or senate. Such records shall not identify individuals but shall include data and contact information concerning specific facilities.

(e) In any hearings conducted under the licensing or regulation provisions of this act, the presiding officer may close the hearing to the public to prevent public disclosure of matters relating to persons restricted by other laws.

(f) Such records shall be confidential and shall not be subject to the open records act, K.S.A. 45-215 et seq., and amendments thereto. This subsection shall expire on July 1, 2031, unless the legislature reviews and reenacts this provision pursuant to K.S.A. 45-229, and amendments thereto, prior to July 1, 2031.

(g) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 31. (a) The director of the Kansas office of early childhood, in addition to any other penalty prescribed under this act, may assess a civil fine, after proper notice and an opportunity to be heard in accordance with the Kansas administrative procedure act, against a licensee for each violation of such provisions or rules and regulations adopted pursuant thereto that affect significantly and adversely the health, safety or sanitation of children in a day care facility. Each civil fine assessed under this section shall not exceed \$500. In the case of a continuing violation, every day such violation continues shall be deemed a separate violation.

(b) All fines assessed and collected under this section shall be remitted to the state treasurer in accordance with K.S.A. 75-4215, and amendments thereto. Upon receipt of each such remittance, the state treasurer shall deposit the entire amount in the state treasury to the credit of the state general fund.

(c) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 32. (a) As used in this section:

(1) "Child" means an individual who is enrolled or attending

kindergarten, is less than 18 years of age, is not a volunteer or employee and is attending a youth development program.

(2) "Premises" means the location, including the building and adjoining grounds, for which the applicant has a temporary permit or license to conduct a youth development program.

(3) "Public recreation center" means any building used by a political or taxing subdivision of this state, or by an agency of such subdivision, for recreation programs that serve children who are less than 18 years of age.

(4) "School" means any building used for instruction of students enrolled in kindergarten or any of the grades one through 12 by a school district or an accredited nonpublic school.

(5) "School-age program" means a child care facility that serves exclusively school-age children and youth but does not include a youth development program.

(6) "Youth development program" means a child care facility where youth activities are conducted that is not located in an individual's residence and that serves children who are enrolled in kindergarten to less than 18 years of age.

(b) No license for a youth development program or school-age program shall be denied, suspended or revoked on the basis that the building does not meet the requirements for licensure if the building:

(1) Is a public recreation center or school and is used by school-age children and youth that are of the same age as children and who are cared for in a youth development program or school-age program;

(2) complies, during all hours of operation of a youth development program or school-age program, with the Kansas fire prevention code or a building code that is by law deemed to comply with the Kansas fire prevention code; and

(3) except as provided in subsection (c), complies during all hours of operation of a youth development program or school-age program with all local building code provisions that apply to recreation centers if the building is a public recreation center or to schools if the building is a school.

(c) If the standards that a building is required to comply with under subsections (b)(2) and (b)(3) are in conflict or are otherwise inconsistent, then the building standards shall be subject to subsection (b)(2).

(d) No license for a youth development program or school-age program that operates in accordance with subsection (b)(1) shall be denied, suspended or revoked based on an environmental deficiency and shall be approved or renewed if:

(1) The environmental deficiency does not pose an imminent risk to children and youth;

(2) the environmental deficiency is outside the applicant's or licensee's immediate authority to correct; and

(3) the applicant or licensee has notified the public recreation center or school of the environmental deficiency.

(e) The director is authorized to adopt rules and regulations applicable to the services provided by youth development programs, regarding health, safety, supervisory qualifications or training and premises safety, including modifications of occupancy capacity limits or group gathering restrictions, consistent with the local or state building or fire codes.

(f) The director shall consult with youth development programs to identify and resolve barriers to such programs qualifying as eligible providers of child care services for which participating families may receive state or federal child care financial assistance.

(g) The director shall develop and implement pilot programs and is authorized to adopt modifications to licenses issued pursuant to this section to provide flexibility to youth development programs to address the needs of families served.

(h) Whenever drop-in program or words of like effect, are referred to or designated by any statute, rule or regulation, contract or

any other document, such reference or designation shall apply to a youth development program.

(i) If a licensed youth development program or school age program operates on or within the premises of a public or private school that is required to pass a fire safety inspection each school year pursuant to K.S.A. 31-144(b), and amendments thereto, no additional fire safety inspection of the licensed youth development program or school age program shall be required by the director, the state fire marshal, the fire chief or any local political or taxing subdivision.

(j) This section shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 33. (a) Any license, certificate of registration or temporary permit that was issued prior to the effective date of this act and is in effect on the effective date of this act shall continue in effect until the expiration thereof, unless suspended or revoked prior to such time.

(b) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 34. (a) As used in this section:

(1) "Day care home" means a child care home as defined in section 16, and amendments thereto, or a group day care home.

(2) "Smoking" means possession of a lighted cigarette, cigar, pipe or burning tobacco in any other form or device designed for the use of tobacco.

(b) Smoking is hereby prohibited within any room, enclosed area or other enclosed space of a facility or facilities of a day care home during a time when children who are not related by blood, marriage or legal adoption to the person who maintains the home are being cared for as part of the operation of the day care home within the facility or facilities. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to prohibit smoking on the premises of the day care home or outside the facility or facilities of a day care home, including, but not limited to, porches, yards or garages.

(c) Each day care license shall contain a statement in bold print that smoking is prohibited within a room, enclosed area or other enclosed space of the facility or facilities of the day care home under the conditions specified in subsection (b). The statement shall be phrased in substantially the same language as subsection (b). The license shall be posted in a conspicuous place in the facility or facilities.

(d) Each day care home shall be equipped with a fire extinguisher that shall be maintained in an operable condition in a readily accessible location.

(e) The director of the Kansas office of early childhood may levy a civil fine against any day care home for a first or second violation of this section. A third or subsequent violation shall be subject to this act.

(f) In addition to any civil fine that may be levied pursuant to subsection (e), any day care home that violates any provision of this section may also be subject to criminal punishment pursuant to K.S.A. 21-6112, and amendments thereto.

(g) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 35. (a) Except as otherwise provided, information and records pertaining to the immunization status of persons against childhood diseases as required by section 21, and amendments thereto, may be disclosed and exchanged without a parent or guardian's written release authorizing such disclosure to the following individuals and groups who need to know such information in order to assure compliance with state statutes or to achieve age-appropriate immunization status for children:

(1) Employees of public agencies or departments;

(2) health records staff of day care facilities, including, but not limited to, facilities licensed by the director of the Kansas office of early childhood;

(3) persons other than public employees who are entrusted with the regular care of those under the care and custody of a state agency, including, but not limited to, operators of day care facilities, group

homes, residential care facilities and adoptive or foster homes; and

(4) healthcare professionals.

(b) Information and records that pertain to the immunization status of persons against childhood diseases as required by section 21, and amendments thereto, whose parent or guardian has submitted a written statement of sincerely held religious beliefs regarding immunization as provided in section 21, and amendments thereto, shall not be disclosed or exchanged without a parent's or guardian's written release authorizing such disclosure.

(c) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

New Sec. 36. (a) The director of the Kansas office of early childhood shall establish or cause to be established an online information dissemination system that is accessible to the public, including names of licensees, applicants and history of citations and substantiated findings. The director shall adopt rules and regulations that are consistent with the requirements for the receipt of child care ARRA funds and provide for the establishment of an online information dissemination system in accordance with this subsection.

(b) This section shall take effect on and after July 1, 2026.

Sec. 37. K.S.A. 38-1901 is hereby amended to read as follows: 38-1901. On and after ~~the effective date of this act~~ *July 1, 2025*:

(a) *(1)* The advisory committee on children and families is hereby redesignated and shall be known and referred to as the Kansas children's cabinet.

(2) The Kansas children's cabinet shall be within the Kansas office of early childhood.

(b) *(1)* The Kansas children's cabinet shall consist of ~~15~~ 18 members as follows:

~~(1)(A)~~ *(A)* The director of the Kansas office of early childhood;

(B) The secretary of health and environment, or the secretary's designee;

~~(2)(C)~~ *(C)* the secretary for children and families, or the secretary's designee;

~~(3)(D)~~ *(D)* a member of the state board of regents selected by the state board of regents, or such member's designee;

~~(4)(E)~~ *(E)* the commissioner of education, or the commissioner's designee;

~~(5)(F) the commissioner of juvenile justice secretary of corrections, or the commissioner's secretary's designee;~~

~~(6)(G)~~ *(G)* a member of the Kansas supreme court selected by the Kansas supreme court, or such member's designee;

~~(7)(H) five members of the public appointed by the governor who are interested in and knowledgeable about the needs of children and families shall be appointed by the governor, which and who, subject to the provisions of subsection (e), may include persons who are children's advocates, members of organizations with experience in programs that benefit children or other individuals who have experience with children's programs and services;~~

~~(8)(I) one person legislative member appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives;~~

~~(9)(J) one legislative member appointed by the majority leader of the house of representatives;~~

~~(K) one person legislative member appointed by the minority leader of the house of representatives;~~

~~(10)(L) one person legislative member appointed by the president of the senate; and~~

~~(11)(M) one legislative member appointed by the majority leader of the senate; and~~

~~(N) one person legislative member appointed by the minority leader of the senate.~~

(2) The members designated by clauses (1), (2), (3), (4), (5) and (6) of this subsection subparagraphs (1)(A) through (1)(G) shall be nonvoting members of the Kansas children's cabinet. All other members shall be voting members.

(c) (1) ~~Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, the members of the Kansas children's cabinet appointed by the governor, speaker, president and minority leaders shall serve for terms of four years and until their successors are appointed and qualified. The governor~~ *voting members* shall appoint a chairperson of the ~~committee cabinet~~ from among the *voting* members ~~appointed by the governor~~. The chairperson shall serve in such office ~~throughout such member's current term of office and~~ until a successor is appointed and qualified. The members of the Kansas children's cabinet may elect any additional officers from among its members necessary to carry out the duties and functions of the Kansas children's cabinet.

(2) ~~Of the members first appointed by the governor, two shall be appointed for terms of two years, two shall be appointed for terms of three years and the member selected by the governor to be the chairperson shall be appointed for a term of four years. The member first appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives shall be appointed for a term of one year, the member first appointed by the minority leader of the house of representatives shall be appointed for a term of two years, the member first appointed by the president of the senate shall be appointed for a term of three years and the member first appointed by the minority leader of the senate shall be appointed for a term of four years. The governor shall designate the term for which each of the members first appointed by the governor shall serve~~ *Each voting member shall serve at the pleasure of such voting member's appointing authority.*

(3) All members appointed to fill vacancies in the membership of the Kansas children's cabinet and all members appointed to succeed members appointed to membership on the Kansas children's cabinet shall be appointed in like manner as that provided for the original appointment of the member succeeded. ~~All members appointed to fill vacancies of a member of the Kansas children's cabinet appointed by the governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, the minority leader of the house of representatives, the president of the senate or the minority leader of the senate shall be appointed to fill the unexpired term of such member.~~

(d) Not more than three members of the Kansas children's cabinet appointed by the governor under subsection ~~(b)(7)~~ *(b)(1)(H)* shall be members of the same political party.

(e) (1) No person shall serve on the Kansas children's cabinet if such person has knowingly acquired a substantial interest in any business. Any such person who knowingly acquires such an interest shall vacate such member's position on the Kansas children's cabinet.

(2) ~~For purposes of~~ *As used in this subsection:*

(A) "Substantial interest" means any of the following:

~~(A)(i)~~ *(i)* If an individual or an individual's spouse, either individually or collectively, has owned within the preceding 12 months a legal or equitable interest exceeding \$5,000 or 5% of any business, whichever is less, the individual has a substantial interest in that business.

~~(B)(ii)~~ *(ii)* If an individual or an individual's spouse, either individually or collectively, has received during the preceding calendar year compensation ~~which~~ *that* is or will be required to be included as taxable income on federal income tax returns of the individual and spouse in an aggregate amount of \$2,000 from any business or combination of businesses, the individual has a substantial interest in that business or combination of businesses.

~~(C)(iii)~~ *(iii)* If an individual or an individual's spouse holds the position of officer, director, associate, partner or proprietor of any business, the individual has a substantial interest in ~~that~~ *the* business, irrespective of that amount of compensation received by the individual or the individual's spouse.

~~(D)(iv)~~ *(iv)* If an individual or an individual's spouse receives compensation ~~which~~ *that* is a portion or percentage of each separate fee or commission paid to a business or combination of businesses, the individual has a substantial interest in any client or customer who pays

fees or commissions to the business or combination of businesses from which fees or commissions the individual or the individual's spouse, either individually or collectively, received an aggregate of \$2,000 or more in the preceding calendar year.

~~(3) As used in this subsection, (B)~~ "Client or customer" means a business or combination of businesses.

~~(4) As used in this subsection, (C)~~ "Business" means any entity ~~which~~ *that* is eligible to receive funds from the children's initiatives fund, as provided in K.S.A. 38-2102, and amendments thereto, from the children's initiatives accountability fund, established by K.S.A. 38-2103, and amendments thereto, or from the family and children trust account of the family and children investment fund, as provided in K.S.A. 38-1808, and amendments thereto.

(f) The Kansas children's cabinet shall meet upon the call of the chairperson as necessary to carry out the duties and functions of the Kansas children's cabinet. A quorum of the Kansas children's cabinet shall be five voting members.

(g) The Kansas children's cabinet shall have and perform the following functions:

(1) Assist the governor *and the director of the Kansas office of early childhood* in developing and implementing a coordinated, comprehensive service delivery system to serve the children and families of Kansas;

(2) identify barriers to service and gaps in service due to strict definitions of boundaries between departments and agencies;

(3) facilitate interagency and interdepartmental cooperation toward the common goal of serving children and families;

(4) investigate and identify methodologies for the combining of funds across departmental boundaries to better serve children and families;

(5) propose actions needed to achieve coordination of funding and services across departmental lines;

(6) encourage and facilitate joint planning and coordination between the public and private sectors to better serve the needs of children and families; ~~and~~

(7) perform the duties and functions prescribed by K.S.A. 38-2103, and amendments thereto; *and*

(8) *review each individual application submitted to the cabinet for any grant funding opportunities and allocate and administer such grants upon direction by the director of the Kansas office of early childhood.*

(h) Members of the Kansas children's cabinet shall not be paid compensation; but shall receive subsistence allowances, mileage and other expenses as provided by K.S.A. 75-3223, and amendments thereto. The subsistence allowances, mileage and other expenses as provided in K.S.A. 75-3223, and amendments thereto, shall be paid from available appropriations of the ~~Kansas department for children and families~~ *Kansas office of early childhood*, except that expenses of members who are employed by a state agency shall be reimbursed by that state agency.

~~(i) On the effective date of this act, the advisory committee on children and families is hereby abolished and all powers, duties, functions, records and other property of the advisory committee on children and families are hereby transferred to the Kansas children's cabinet created by this section. Except as otherwise specifically provided by this act, the Kansas children's cabinet shall be a continuation of the advisory committee on children and families as it existed prior to the effective date of this act.~~

Sec. 38. K.S.A. 38-2103 is hereby amended to read as follows: 38-2103. (a) The Kansas children's cabinet established by K.S.A. 38-1901, and amendments thereto, shall advise the governor ~~and~~, the legislature *and the director of the Kansas office of early childhood* regarding the uses of the moneys credited to the children's initiatives fund.

(b) *Use of such funds shall be subject to appropriations made by*

the legislature.

(c) The Kansas children's cabinet shall review, assess and evaluate all uses of the moneys in the children's initiatives fund. The Kansas children's cabinet shall study and shall initiate studies, assessments and evaluations, by contract or otherwise, through institutions of higher education and other appropriate research entities to identify best practices and to measure and otherwise determine the efficiency and efficacy of practices that are utilized in programs, projects, improvements, services and other purposes for which moneys are allocated or appropriated from the children's initiatives fund. The costs of such reviews, assessments and evaluations shall be paid from the children's initiatives accountability fund.

~~(e)~~(d) There shall be conducted performance audits and other audit work by the legislative post auditor upon request by the Kansas children's cabinet and as directed by the legislative post audit committee in accordance with ~~the provisions of~~ the legislative post audit act. The purpose of such performance audits and other audit work shall be to provide interested parties with the program evaluation and research needed to make informed decisions for the uses of moneys credited to the children's initiatives fund. The auditor to conduct such performance audit or other audit work shall be specified in accordance with K.S.A. 46-1122, and amendments thereto, and if the legislative post audit committee specifies under such statute that a firm, as defined by K.S.A. 46-1112, and amendments thereto, is to perform all or part of the audit work of such audit, such firm shall be selected and shall perform such audit work as provided in K.S.A. 46-1123, ~~and amendments thereto, and K.S.A. 46-1125 through 46-1127, and amendments thereto.~~ The audit work required pursuant to this subsection shall be conducted in accordance with generally accepted governmental auditing standards. The post auditor shall compute the reasonably anticipated cost of the audit work performed by a firm for such performance audit or other audit work pursuant to this subsection, subject to review and approval by the contract audit committee established by K.S.A. 46-1120, and amendments thereto, and the Kansas children's cabinet shall pay such cost from the children's initiatives accountability fund. If all or part of the audit work for such performance audit or other audit work is performed by the division of post audit and the division of post audit incurs costs in addition to those attributable to the operations of the division of post audit in the performance of other duties and responsibilities, the post auditor shall charge the Kansas children's cabinet for such additional costs and the Kansas children's cabinet shall pay such charges from the children's initiatives accountability fund. The payment of any such costs and any such charges shall be a transaction between the division of post audit and the Kansas children's cabinet and such transaction shall be settled in accordance with ~~the provisions of~~ K.S.A. 75-5516, and amendments thereto. All moneys received by the division of post audit for such costs and charges shall be credited to the audit services fund.

~~(d)~~(e) There is hereby established in the state treasury the children's initiatives accountability fund *within the Kansas office of early childhood*, which shall be administered in accordance with this section and ~~the provisions of~~ appropriation acts. The governor shall recommend and the legislature shall provide for moneys to be credited annually to the children's initiatives accountability fund by transfers or ~~other provisions of~~ appropriation acts.

~~(e)~~(f) All moneys credited to the children's initiatives accountability fund shall be used for the purposes of providing funding for assessment and evaluation of programs, projects, improvements, services and other purposes for which moneys are allocated or appropriated from the children's initiatives fund. All expenditures from the children's initiatives accountability fund shall be made in accordance with appropriation acts upon warrants of the director of accounts and reports issued pursuant to vouchers approved in the manner prescribed by law.

(f)(g) On or before the 10th day of each month, the director of accounts and reports shall transfer from the state general fund to the Kansas endowment for youth fund interest earnings based on *the*:

(1) ~~The~~ Average daily balance of moneys in the children's initiatives accountability fund for the preceding month; and

(2) ~~the~~ net earnings rate of the pooled money investment portfolio for the preceding month.

Sec. 39. K.S.A. 2024 Supp. 48-3406 is hereby amended to read as follows: 48-3406. (a) For the purposes of this section:

(1) "Applicant" means an individual who is:

(A) A military spouse or military servicemember who resides or plans to reside in this state due to the assigned military station of the individual or the individual's spouse; or

(B) an individual who has established or intends to establish residency in this state.

(2) "Complete application" means the licensing body has received all forms, fees, documentation, a signed affidavit stating that the application information, including necessary prior employment history, is true and accurate and any other information required or requested by the licensing body for the purpose of evaluating the application, consistent with this section and the rules and regulations adopted by the licensing body pursuant to this section. If the licensing body has received all such forms, fees, documentation and any other information required or requested by the licensing body, an application shall be deemed to be a complete application even if the licensing body has not yet received a criminal background report from the Kansas bureau of investigation. An application by a military spouse of an active military servicemember shall be considered a "complete application" without the submission of fees, pursuant to ~~the provisions of~~ subsection (u).

(3) "Electronic credential" or "electronic certification, license or registration" means an electronic method by which a person may display or transmit to another person information that verifies the status of a person's certification, licensure, registration or permit as authorized by a licensing body and is equivalent to a paper-based certification, license, registration or permit.

(4) "Licensing body" means an official, agency, board or other entity of the state that authorizes individuals to practice a profession in this state and issues a license, registration, certificate, permit or other authorization to an individual so authorized.

(5) "Military servicemember" means a current member of any branch of the United States armed services, United States military reserves or national guard of any state or a former member with an honorable discharge.

(6) "Military spouse" means the spouse of a military servicemember.

(7) "Person" means a natural person.

(8) "Private certification" means a voluntary program in which a private organization grants nontransferable recognition to an individual who meets personal qualifications and standards relevant to performing the occupation as determined by the private organization.

(9) "Scope of practice" means the procedures, actions, processes and work that a person may perform under a government issued license, registration or certification.

(10) "Verification system" means an electronic method by which the authenticity and validity of electronic credentials are verified.

(b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any licensing body shall, upon submission of a complete application, issue a paper-based and verified electronic license, registration or certification to an applicant as provided by this section, so that the applicant may lawfully practice the person's occupation. Any licensing body may satisfy any requirement under this section to provide a paper-based license, registration, certification or permit in addition to an electronic license, registration, certification or permit by issuing such electronic credential to the applicant in a format that permits the applicant to print a paper

copy of such electronic credential. Such paper copy shall be considered a valid license, registration, certification or permit for all purposes.

(c) An applicant who holds a valid current license, registration or certification in another state, district or territory of the United States shall receive a paper-based and verified electronic license, registration or certification:

(1) If the applicant qualifies under the applicable Kansas licensure, registration or certification by endorsement, reinstatement or reciprocity statutes, then pursuant to applicable licensure, registration or certification by endorsement, reinstatement or reciprocity statutes of the licensing body of this state for the license, registration or certification within 15 days from the date a complete application was submitted if the applicant is a military servicemember or military spouse or within 45 days from the date a complete application was submitted for all other applicants; or

(2) if the applicant does not qualify under the applicable licensure, registration or certification by endorsement, reinstatement or reciprocity statutes of the licensing body of this state, or if the Kansas professional practice act does not have licensure, registration or certification by endorsement, reinstatement or reciprocity statutes, then the applicant shall receive a license, registration or certification as provided herein if, at the time of application, the applicant:

(A) Holds a valid current license, registration or certification in another state, district or territory of the United States with licensure, registration or certification requirements that the licensing body determines authorize a similar scope of practice as those established by the licensing body of this state, or holds a certification issued by another state for practicing the occupation but this state requires an occupational license, and the licensing body of this state determines that the certification requirements certify a similar scope of practice as the licensing requirements established by the licensing body of this state;

(B) has worked for at least one year in the occupation for which the license, certification or registration is sought;

(C) has not committed an act in any jurisdiction that would have constituted grounds for the limitation, suspension or revocation of the license, certificate or registration, or that the applicant has never been censured or had other disciplinary action taken or had an application for licensure, registration or certification denied or refused to practice an occupation for which the applicant seeks licensure, registration or certification;

(D) has not been disciplined by a licensing, registering, certifying or other credentialing entity in another jurisdiction and is not the subject of an unresolved complaint, review procedure or disciplinary proceeding conducted by a licensing, registering, certifying or other credentialing entity in another jurisdiction nor has surrendered their membership on any professional staff in any professional association or society or faculty for another state or jurisdiction while under investigation or to avoid adverse action for acts or conduct similar to acts or conduct that would constitute grounds for disciplinary action in a Kansas practice act;

(E) does not have a disqualifying criminal record as determined by the licensing body of this state under Kansas law;

(F) provides proof of solvency, financial standing, bonding or insurance if required by the licensing body of this state, but only to the same extent as required of any applicant with similar credentials or experience;

(G) pays any fees required by the licensing body of this state; and

(H) submits with the application a signed affidavit stating that the application information, including necessary prior employment history, is true and accurate.

Upon receiving a complete application and the provisions of subsection (c)(2) apply and have been met by the applicant, the licensing body shall issue the license, registration or certification within

15 days from the date a complete application was submitted by a military servicemember or military spouse, or within 45 days from the date a complete application was submitted by an applicant who is not a military servicemember or military spouse, to the applicant on a probationary basis, but may revoke the license, registration or certification at any time if the information provided in the application is found to be false. The probationary period shall not exceed six months. Upon completion of the probationary period, the license, certification or registration shall become a non-probationary license, certification or registration.

(d) Any applicant who has not been in the active practice of the occupation during the two years preceding the application for which the applicant seeks a license, registration or certification under subsection (c)(2) may be required to complete such additional testing, training, monitoring or continuing education as the Kansas licensing body may deem necessary to establish the applicant's present ability to practice in a manner that protects the health and safety of the public, as provided by subsection (j).

(e) Upon submission of a complete application, an applicant may receive an occupational license, registration or certification based on the applicant's work experience in another state, if the applicant:

(1) Worked in a state that does not use an occupational license, registration, certification or private certification to regulate an occupation, but this state uses an occupational license, registration or certification to regulate the occupation;

(2) worked for at least three years in the occupation during the four years immediately preceding the application; and

(3) satisfies the requirements of subsection (c)(2)(C) through (H).

(f) Upon submission of a complete application, an applicant may receive an occupational license, registration or certification under subsection (b) based on the applicant's holding of a private certification and work experience in another state, if the applicant:

(1) Holds a private certification and worked in a state that does not use an occupational license or government certification to regulate an occupation, but this state uses an occupational license or government certification to regulate the occupation;

(2) worked for at least two years in the occupation;

(3) holds a current and valid private certification in the occupation;

(4) is held in good standing by the organization that issued the private certification; and

(5) satisfies the requirements of subsection (c)(2)(C) through (H).

(g) An applicant licensed, registered or certified under this section shall be entitled to the same rights and subject to the same obligations as are provided by the licensing body for Kansas residents, except that revocation or suspension of an applicant's license, registration or certificate in the applicant's state of residence or any jurisdiction in which the applicant held a license, registration or certificate shall automatically cause the same revocation or suspension of such applicant's license, registration or certificate in Kansas. No hearing shall be granted to an applicant where such applicant's license, registration or certificate is subject to such automatic revocation or suspension, except for the purpose of establishing the fact of revocation or suspension of the applicant's license, registration or certificate by the applicant's state of residence or jurisdiction in which the applicant held a license, registration or certificate.

(h) In the event the licensing body determines that the license, registration or certificate currently held by an applicant under subsection (c)(2) or the work experience or private credential held by an applicant under subsections (e) or (f), who is a military spouse or military servicemember does not authorize a similar scope of practice as the license, registration or certification issued by the licensing body of this state, the licensing body shall issue a temporary permit for a limited period of time to allow the applicant to lawfully practice the

applicant's occupation while completing any specific requirements that are required in this state for licensure, registration or certification that were not required in the state, district or territory of the United States in which the applicant was licensed, registered, certified or otherwise credentialed, unless the licensing body finds, based on specific grounds, that issuing a temporary permit would jeopardize the health and safety of the public.

(i) In the event the licensing body determines that the license, registration or certification currently held by an applicant under subsection (c)(2) or the work experience or private credential held by an applicant under subsections (e) or (f), who is not a military spouse or military servicemember, does not authorize a similar scope of practice as the license, registration or certification issued by the licensing body of this state, the licensing body may issue a temporary permit for a limited period of time to allow the applicant to lawfully practice the applicant's occupation while completing any specific requirements that are required in this state for licensure, registration or certification that was not required in the state, district or territory of the United States in which the applicant was licensed, registered, certified or otherwise credentialed, unless the licensing body finds, based on specific grounds, that issuing a temporary permit would jeopardize the health and safety of the public.

(j) Any testing, continuing education or training requirements administered under subsection (d), (h) or (i) shall be limited to Kansas law that regulates the occupation and that are materially different from or additional to the law of another state, or shall be limited to any materially different or additional body of knowledge or skill required for the occupational license, registration or certification in Kansas.

(k) A licensing body may grant licensure, registration, certification or a temporary permit to any person who meets the requirements under this section but was separated from such military service under less than honorable conditions or with a general discharge under honorable conditions.

(l) Nothing in this section shall be construed to apply in conflict with or in a manner inconsistent with federal law or a multistate compact, or a rule or regulation or a reciprocal or other applicable statutory provision that would allow an applicant to receive a license. Nothing in this section shall be construed as prohibiting a licensing body from denying any application for licensure, registration or certification, or declining to grant a temporary or probationary license, if the licensing body determines that granting the application may jeopardize the health and safety of the public.

(m) Nothing in this section shall be construed to be in conflict with any applicable Kansas statute defining the scope of practice of an occupation. The scope of practice as provided by Kansas law shall apply to applicants under this section.

(n) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, during a state of emergency declared by the legislature, a licensing body may grant a temporary emergency license to practice any profession licensed, certified, registered or regulated by the licensing body to an applicant whose qualifications the licensing body determines to be sufficient to protect health and safety of the public and may prohibit any unlicensed person from practicing any profession licensed, certified, registered or regulated by the licensing body.

(o) ~~Not later than January 1, 2025,~~ Licensing bodies shall provide paper-based and verified electronic credentials to persons regulated by the licensing body. A licensing body may prescribe the format or requirements of the electronic credential to be used by the licensing body. Any statutory or regulatory requirement to display, post or produce a credential issued by a licensing body may be satisfied by the proffer of an electronic credential authorized by the licensing body. A licensing body may use a third-party electronic credential system that is not maintained by the licensing body.

(p) ~~On or before January 1, 2025, and~~ Subject to appropriations

~~therefore~~ *therefor*, the secretary of administration shall develop and implement a uniform or singular license verification portal for the purpose of verifying or reporting license statuses such as credentials issued, renewed, revoked or suspended by licensing bodies or that have expired or otherwise changed in status. The secretary of administration may utilize the services or facilities of a third party for the central electronic record system. The central electronic record system shall comply with the requirements adopted by the information technology executive council pursuant to K.S.A. 75-7203, and amendments thereto. ~~Beginning January 1, 2025,~~ Each licensing body shall be able to integrate with the uniform or singular license verification portal in the manner and format required by the secretary of administration indicating any issuance, renewal, revocation, suspension, expiration or other change in status of an electronic credential that has occurred. No charge for the establishment or maintenance of the uniform or singular license verification portal shall be imposed on any licensing body or any person with a license, registration, certification or permit issued by a licensing body. The centralized electronic credential data management systems shall include an instantaneous verification system that is operated by the licensing body's respective secretary, or the secretary's designee, or the secretary's third-party agent on behalf of the licensing body for the purpose of instantly verifying the authenticity and validity of electronic credentials issued by the licensing body. Centralized electronic credential data management systems shall maintain an auditable record of credentials issued by each licensing body.

(q) Nothing in this section shall be construed as prohibiting or preventing a licensing body from developing, operating, maintaining or using a separate electronic credential system of the licensing body or of a third party in addition to making the reports to the central electronic record system required by subsection (p) or participating in a multistate compact or a reciprocal licensure, registration or certification process as long as the separate electronic credential system of the licensing body integrates with the uniform or singular license verification portal.

(r) Each licensing body shall adopt rules and regulations necessary to implement and carry out ~~the provisions of~~ this section.

(s) This section shall not apply to the practice of law or the regulation of attorneys pursuant to K.S.A. 7-103, and amendments thereto, or to the certification of law enforcement officers pursuant to the Kansas law enforcement training act, K.S.A. 74-5601 et seq., and amendments thereto.

(t) The state board of healing arts and the state board of technical professions, with respect to an applicant who is seeking a license to practice professional engineering or engage in the practice of engineering, as defined in K.S.A. 74-7003, and amendments thereto, may deny an application for licensure, registration or certification, or decline to grant a temporary or probationary license, if the board determines the applicant's qualifications are not substantially equivalent to those established by the board. Such boards shall not otherwise be exempt from ~~the provisions of~~ this act.

(u) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, applicants who are military spouses of active military service members shall be exempt from all fees assessed by any licensing body to obtain an occupational credential in Kansas and renew such credential including initial or renewal application, licensing, registration, certification, endorsement, reciprocity or permit fees and any criminal background report fees, whether assessed by the licensing body or another agency. Licensing bodies shall adopt rules and regulations to implement ~~the provisions of~~ this subsection.

(v) This section shall apply to all licensing bodies not excluded under subsection (s), including, but not limited to:

- (1) The abstracters' board of examiners;
- (2) the board of accountancy;
- (3) the board of adult care home administrators;

- (4) the secretary for aging and disability services, with respect to K.S.A. 65-5901 et seq. and 65-6503 et seq., and amendments thereto;
- (5) the Kansas board of barbering;
- (6) the behavioral sciences regulatory board;
- (7) the Kansas state board of cosmetology;
- (8) the Kansas dental board;
- (9) the state board of education;
- (10) the Kansas board of examiners in fitting and dispensing of hearing instruments;
- (11) the board of examiners in optometry;
- (12) the state board of healing arts, as provided by subsection (t);
- (13) the ~~secretary~~ *department* of health and environment, with respect to K.S.A. 82a-1201 et seq., and amendments thereto;
- (14) *the department of health and environment, with respect to child care facility licensure pursuant to article 5 of chapter 65 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto, on or before June 30, 2026;*
- (15) *the Kansas office of early childhood, on and after July 1, 2026;*
- (16) the commissioner of insurance, with respect to K.S.A. 40-241 and 40-4901 et seq., and amendments thereto;
- ~~(15)~~(17) the state board of mortuary arts;
- ~~(16)~~(18) the board of nursing;
- ~~(17)~~(19) the state board of pharmacy;
- ~~(18)~~(20) the Kansas real estate commission;
- ~~(19)~~(21) the real estate appraisal board;
- ~~(20)~~(22) the state board of technical professions, as provided by subsection (t); and
- ~~(21)~~(23) the state board of veterinary examiners.

(w) All proceedings pursuant to this section shall be conducted in accordance with ~~the provisions of~~ the Kansas administrative procedure act and shall be reviewable in accordance with the Kansas judicial review act.

(x) ~~(1) Commencing on July 1, 2021, and each year thereafter,~~ Each licensing body listed in subsection ~~(u)(1) (v)(1) through (21) (22)~~ shall provide a report for the period of July 1 through June 30 to the director of legislative research by August 31 of each year, providing information requested by the director of legislative research to fulfill the requirements of this subsection. The director of legislative research shall develop the report format, prepare an analysis of the reports and submit and present the analysis to the office of the governor, the *house of representatives* committee on commerce, labor and economic development ~~of the house of representatives or any successor committee thereof, the senate committee on commerce of the senate or any successor committee thereof, the house of representatives committee on appropriations of the house of representatives or any successor committee thereof~~ and the *senate* committee on ways and means ~~of the senate or any successor committee thereof~~ by January 15 of the succeeding year. The director's report may provide any analysis the director deems useful and shall provide the following items, detailed by applicant type, including military servicemember, military spouse and non-military individual:

- ~~(1)~~(A) The number of applications received under ~~the provisions of~~ this section;
- (2)(B) the number of applications granted under this section;
- (3)(C) the number of applications denied under this section;
- (4)(D) the average time between receipt of the application and completion of the application;
- ~~(5)~~(E) the average time between receipt of a complete application and issuance of a license, certification or registration; and
- ~~(6)~~(F) identification of applications submitted under this section where the issuance of credentials or another determination by the licensing body was not made within the time limitations pursuant to this section and the reasons for the failure to meet such time limitations.

(2) All information shall be provided by the licensing body to the director of legislative research in a manner that maintains the confidentiality of all applicants and in aggregate form that does not permit identification of individual applicants.

Sec. 40. K.S.A. 65-501 is hereby amended to read as follows: 65-501. (a) It shall be unlawful for any person, firm, corporation or association to conduct or maintain a maternity center or a child care facility for children under 16 years of age without having a license or temporary permit therefor from the secretary of health and environment. Nothing in this act shall apply to:

~~(a)(1)~~ A residential facility or hospital that is operated and maintained by a state agency as defined in K.S.A. 75-3701, and amendments thereto; ~~or~~

~~(b)(2)~~ a summer instructional camp that:

~~(1) Is operated by a Kansas educational institution as defined in K.S.A. 74-32,120, and amendments thereto, or a postsecondary educational institution as defined in K.S.A. 74-3201b, and amendments thereto;~~

~~(2) is operated for not more than five weeks;~~

~~(3) provides instruction to children, all of whom are 10 years of age and older; and~~

~~(4) is accredited by an agency or organization acceptable to the secretary of health and environment is provided by a not-for-profit, school, verifiable nonpublic school or an employee of such school; or~~

~~(3) a person or group of persons providing educational activities for children ages pre-K through high school to such persons' children.~~

~~(b) Organizations or persons providing services defined as a day care in K.S.A. 65-503, and amendments thereto, and not included in this section may apply for and be granted a waiver as allowed under this act.~~

Sec. 41. K.S.A. 2024 Supp. 65-503 is hereby amended to read as follows: 65-503. As used in this act:

~~(a) "Child placement agency" means a business or service conducted, maintained or operated by a person engaged in finding homes for children by placing or arranging for the placement of such children for adoption or foster care.~~

~~(b) "Child care resource and referral agency" means a business or service conducted, maintained or operated by a person engaged in providing resource and referral services, including information of specific services provided by child care facilities, to assist parents to find child care. "Act" means article 5 of chapter 65 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto.~~

~~(b) "Assistant teacher" means a staff member of a child care center and is responsible for assisting the lead teacher in the care of children.~~

~~(c) "Boarding school" means a facility that provides 24-hour care to school age children, provides education as its primary function and is accredited by an accrediting agency acceptable to the secretary of health and environment.~~

~~(d) "Child care center" means a facility that meets child care center regulations and provides care and educational activities for children.~~

~~(e) "Child care facility" means:~~

~~(1) A facility maintained by a person who has control or custody of one or more children under 16 years of age, unattended by parent or guardian, for the purpose of providing the children with food or lodging, or both, except excluding children in the custody of the secretary for children and families who are placed with a prospective adoptive family pursuant to the provisions of an adoptive placement agreement or who are related to the person by blood, marriage or legal adoption;~~

~~(2) a children's home, orphanage, maternity home, day care facility or other facility of a type determined by that the secretary determines to require regulation under the provisions of this act;~~

(3) a child placement agency or child care resource and referral agency, or a facility maintained by such an agency for the purpose of caring for children under 16 years of age; or

(4) any receiving or detention home for children under 16 years of age provided or maintained by, or receiving aid from, any city or county or the state.

(5) *On and after July 1, 2026, "child care facility" does not include day care facility or child resource and referral agency.*

~~(d)(f)~~ *"Child care home" means the premises where care is provided for children at a residence.*

(g) *"Child care resource and referral agency" means a business or service conducted, maintained or operated by a person engaged in providing resource and referral services, including information of specific services provided by child care facilities, to assist parents to find child care.*

(h) *"Child placement agency" means a business or service conducted, maintained or operated by a person engaged in finding homes for children by placing or arranging for the placement of such children for adoption or foster care.*

(i) (1) *"Day care facility" means a child care facility that includes a day care home, preschool, child care center, school-age program or other facility of a type determined by the secretary to require regulation under the provisions of K.S.A. 65-501 et seq., and amendments thereto.*

(2) *"Day care facility" does not include a youth development program.*

(3) *On and after July 1, 2026, this subsection shall expire.*

~~(e)(j)~~ *"Employee" means a person working, regularly volunteering or residing in a child care facility.*

(k) *"Infant" means a child who is between two weeks and 12 months of age or a child older than 12 months who has not yet learned to walk.*

(l) *"Lead teacher" means an individual who meets the requirements of section 1, and amendments thereto, and can independently staff any unit in a child care center.*

(m) *"Licensure year" means the period of time beginning on the effective date and ending on the expiration date of a license.*

(n) *"Maternity center" means a facility that provides delivery services for normal, uncomplicated pregnancies but does not include a medical care facility as defined by K.S.A. 65-425, and amendments thereto.*

(o) *"Person" means any individual, association, partnership, corporation, government, governmental subdivision or other entity.*

~~(f) "Boarding school" means a facility which provides 24-hour care to school-age children, provides education as its primary function, and is accredited by an accrediting agency acceptable to the secretary of health and environment.~~

~~(g) "Maternity center" means a facility which provides delivery services for normal, uncomplicated pregnancies but does not include a medical care facility as defined by K.S.A. 65-425, and amendments thereto.~~

~~(h) "Employee" means a person working, regularly volunteering or residing in a child care facility.~~

(p) *"Program director" means the staff member of a child care center and is responsible for implementing and supervising the comprehensive and coordinated plan of activities that provide for the education, care, protection and development of children who attend a child care center.*

(q) *"Religious beliefs" means the same as defined in K.S.A. 44-663, and amendments thereto.*

(r) *"School-age" means a child who will be at least six years of age on or before the first day of September of any school year but is under 16 years of age.*

(s) *"Unit" means the number of children who may be present in one group in a child care center.*

(t) *"Youth development program" means the same as defined in K.S.A. 65-527, and amendments thereto.*

Sec. 42. On and after July 1, 2026, K.S.A. 65-504 is hereby amended to read as follows: 65-504. (a) The secretary of health and environment shall have the power to grant a license to a person to maintain a maternity center or child care facility for children under 16 years of age. A license granted to maintain a maternity center or child care facility shall state the name of the licensee, describe the particular premises in or at which the business shall be carried on, whether it shall receive and care for women or children, and the number of women or children that may be treated, maintained, boarded or cared for at any one time. No greater number of women or children than is authorized in the license shall be kept on those premises and the business shall not be carried on in a building or place not designated in the license. The license shall be kept posted in a conspicuous place on the premises where the business is conducted. ~~A license granted to maintain a day care facility shall have on its face an expiration sticker stating the date of expiration of the license.~~

The secretary of health and environment shall grant no license in any case until careful inspection of the maternity center or child care facility shall have been made according to the terms of this act and until such maternity center or child care facility has complied with all the requirements of this act. Except as provided by this subsection, no license shall be granted without the approval of the secretary for children and families. The secretary of health and environment may issue, without the approval of the secretary for children and families, a temporary permit to operate for a period not to exceed 90 days upon receipt of an initial application for license. The secretary of health and environment may extend, without the approval of the secretary for children and families, the temporary permit to operate for an additional period not to exceed 90 days if an applicant is not in full compliance with the requirements of this act but has made efforts towards full compliance.

(b) (1) In all cases where the secretary for children and families deems it necessary, an investigation of the maternity center or child care facility shall be made under the supervision of the secretary for children and families or other designated qualified agents. For that purpose and for any subsequent investigations they shall have the right of entry and access to the premises of the center or facility and to any information deemed necessary to the completion of the investigation. In all cases where an investigation is made, a report of the investigation of such center or facility shall be filed with the secretary of health and environment.

(2) In cases where neither approval or disapproval can be given within a period of 30 days following formal request for such a study, the secretary of health and environment may issue a temporary license without fee pending final approval or disapproval of the center or facility.

(c) Whenever the secretary of health and environment refuses to grant a license to an applicant, the secretary shall issue an order to that effect stating the reasons for such denial and within five days after the issuance of such order shall notify the applicant of the refusal. Upon application not more than 15 days after the date of its issuance a hearing on the order shall be held in accordance with ~~the provisions of~~ the Kansas administrative procedure act.

(d) When the secretary of health and environment finds upon investigation or is advised by the secretary for children and families that ~~any of the provisions of this act or the provisions of K.S.A. 59-2123, and amendments thereto, are being violated, or that the maternity center or child care facility is maintained without due regard to the health, safety or welfare of any woman or child, the secretary of health and environment may issue an order revoking such license after giving notice and conducting a hearing in accordance with the provisions of~~ the Kansas administrative procedure act. The order shall clearly state

the reason for the revocation.

(e) If the secretary revokes or refuses to renew a license, the licensee who had a license revoked or not renewed shall not be eligible to apply for a license for a period of one year subsequent to the date such revocation or refusal to renew becomes final. If the secretary revokes or refuses to renew a license of a licensee who is a repeat, three or more times, violator of statutory requirements or rules and regulations or is found to have contributed to the death or serious bodily harm of a child under such licensee's care, such licensee shall be permanently prohibited from applying for a new license to provide child care or from seeking employment under another licensee.

(f) Any applicant or licensee aggrieved by a final order of the ~~secretary of health and environment~~ denying or revoking a license under this act may appeal the order in accordance with the Kansas judicial review act.

Sec. 43. K.S.A. 65-505 is hereby amended to read as follows: 65-505. (a) *(1)* The annual fee for a license to conduct a maternity center or child care facility shall be fixed by the secretary of health and environment by rules and regulations in an amount not exceeding the following:

~~(1)(A)~~ For a maternity center, \$150;
~~(2)(B)~~ for a child placement agency, \$150; *and*
~~(3)(C)~~ for a child care resource and referral agency, \$150; ~~and~~.
~~(4)(2)~~ ~~for any other~~ *Except for child care facilities listed in paragraph (1), there shall be no annual fee for a license to conduct a child care facility, \$75 plus \$1 times the maximum number of children authorized under the license to be on the premises at any one time.*

(3) The license fee shall be paid to the secretary of health and environment when the license is applied for and annually thereafter. The fee shall not be refundable. No fee shall be charged for a license to conduct a home for children ~~which that~~ is a family foster home as defined in K.A.R. 28-4-311, and amendments thereto. ~~Fees in effect under this subsection (a) immediately prior to the effective date of this act shall continue in effect on and after the effective date of this act until a different fee is established by the secretary of health and environment by rules and regulations under this subsection.~~

(b) Any licensee who fails to renew such license within 30 days after the expiration of the license shall pay to the secretary the renewal fee plus a late fee in an amount of \$75 or equal to the fee for the renewal of a license, *whichever is greater*.

(c) Any licensee applying for an amended license shall pay to the secretary of health and environment a fee established by rules and regulations of the secretary in an amount not exceeding \$35.

(d) The secretary of health and environment shall remit all moneys received by the secretary from fees under the provisions of this section to the state treasurer in accordance with ~~the provisions of~~ K.S.A. 75-4215, and amendments thereto. Upon receipt of each such remittance, the state treasurer, notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, shall deposit the entire amount in the state treasury to the credit of the maternity centers and child care licensing fee fund. All expenditures from the maternity centers and child care licensing fee fund shall be made only for the purposes of article 5 of chapter 65 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, *and amendments thereto*, in accordance with appropriation acts upon warrants of the director of accounts and reports issued pursuant to vouchers approved by the secretary of health and environment or by a person or persons designated by the secretary. Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, no moneys shall be transferred or otherwise revert from this fund to the state general fund by appropriation act or other act of the legislature. Moneys available under this section by the creation of the maternity centers and child care licensing fee fund shall not be substituted for or used to reduce or eliminate moneys available to the department of health and environment to administer the provisions of article 5 of chapter 65 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, *and amendments thereto*. Nothing in

this act shall be construed to authorize a reduction or elimination of moneys made available by the state to local units of government for the purposes of article 5 of chapter 65 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, *and amendments thereto*.

Sec. 44. K.S.A. 65-508 is hereby amended to read as follows: 65-508. (a) Any maternity center or child care facility subject to ~~the provisions of this act shall:~~

- (1) Be properly heated, plumbed, lighted and ventilated;
- (2) have plumbing, water and sewerage systems ~~which~~ *that* conform to all applicable state and local laws; and
- (3) be operated with strict regard to the health, safety and welfare of any woman or child.

(b) (1) Every maternity center or child care facility shall furnish or cause to be furnished for the use of each resident and employee *an* individual towel, ~~wash cloth~~ *washcloth or disposable products*, comb ~~and~~, individual drinking cup or sanitary bubbling fountain; and toothbrushes for all *children* other than infants, and shall keep or require such articles to be kept at all times in a clean and sanitary condition.

(2) *Toothbrushes in a day care facility may be used after meals or as appropriate.*

(3) Every maternity center or child care facility shall comply with all applicable fire codes and rules and regulations of the state fire marshal.

(c) (1) The secretary of health and environment with the cooperation of the secretary for children and families shall develop and adopt rules and regulations for the operation and maintenance of maternity centers and child care facilities. The rules and regulations for operating and maintaining maternity centers and child care facilities shall be designed to promote the health, safety and welfare of any woman or child served in such facilities by ensuring safe and adequate physical surroundings, healthful food, adequate handwashing, safe storage of toxic substances and hazardous chemicals, sanitary diapering and toileting, home sanitation, supervision and care of the residents by capable, qualified persons of sufficient number, after-hour care, an adequate program of activities and services, sudden infant death syndrome and safe sleep practices training, prohibition on corporal punishment, crib safety, protection from electrical hazards, protection from swimming pools and other water sources, fire drills, emergency plans, safety of outdoor playground surfaces, door locks, safety gates and transportation and such appropriate parental participation as may be feasible under the circumstances. Boarding schools are excluded from requirements regarding the number of qualified persons who must supervise and provide care to residents.

(2) Rules and regulations developed under this subsection shall include provisions for the competent supervision and care of children in day care facilities. For purposes of such rules and regulations, competent supervision as this term relates to children less than five years of age includes, but is not limited to, direction of activities, adequate oversight including sight or sound monitoring, or both, physical proximity to children, diapering and toileting practices; and for all children, competent supervision includes, but is not limited to, planning and supervision of daily activities, safe sleep practices, including, but not limited to, visual or sound monitoring, periodic checking, emergency response procedures and drills, illness and injury response procedures, food service preparation and sanitation, playground supervision, pool and water safety practices.

(d) In addition to any rules and regulations adopted under this section for safe sleep practices, child care facilities shall ensure that all of the following requirements are met for children under 12 months of age:

- (1) A child shall only be placed to sleep on a surface and in an area that has been approved for use as such by the secretary of health and environment;

(2) the sleep surface shall be free from soft or loose bedding, including, but not limited to, blankets, bumpers and pillows; and

(3) the sleep surface shall be free from toys, including mobiles and other types of play equipment or devices.

(e) Child care facilities shall ensure that children over 12 months of age only be placed to sleep on a surface and in an area that has been approved for use as such by the secretary of health and environment.

(f) The secretary of health and environment may exercise discretion to make exceptions to requirements in subsections (d) and (e) where special health needs exist.

(g) Each child cared for in a child care facility, including children of the person maintaining the facility, shall be required to have current such immunizations as the secretary of health and environment considers necessary. The person maintaining a child care facility shall maintain a record of each child's immunizations and shall provide to the secretary of health and environment such information relating thereto, in accordance with rules and regulations of the secretary, but the person maintaining a child care facility shall not have such person's license revoked solely for the failure to have or to maintain the immunization records required by this subsection.

(h) The immunization requirement of subsection (g) shall not apply if one of the following is obtained:

(1) Certification from a licensed physician stating that the physical condition of the child is such that immunization would endanger the child's life or health; or

(2) a written statement signed by ~~a~~ *the child's* parent or guardian that ~~the parent or guardian is an adherent of a such immunization violates sincerely held religious denomination whose teachings are opposed to immunizations~~ *beliefs of the parent or guardian.*

(i) *On and after July 1, 2026, any references to day care facilities shall be under the administration of the director of early childhood.*

Sec. 45. K.S.A. 65-512 is hereby amended to read as follows: 65-512. (a) It is hereby made the duty of the secretary of health and environment to inspect or cause to be inspected at least once every 15 months prior to July 1, 2012, and once every 12 months thereafter, every maternity center or child care facility, unless otherwise provided in subsections (b) and (c). For the purpose of inspection, the secretary or the secretary's authorized agent, *as an employee of the secretary or who has a contract with the secretary to provide inspections pursuant to K.S.A. 65-501 et seq. and who holds a certificate issued pursuant to subsection (c),* shall have the right of entry and access ~~thereto in~~ to every department and ~~to~~ every place in the premises, ~~shall to~~ call for and examine the records ~~which that~~ are required to be kept by the provisions of this act and ~~shall to~~ make and preserve a record of every inspection. The licensee shall give all reasonable information to the authorized agent of the secretary of health and environment and shall afford every reasonable facility for viewing the premises and seeing the patients or children therein. No such patient or child, without the consent of the patient or ~~child~~ *child's parent*, shall be required to be interviewed by any agent ~~unless the agent is an authorized person or a licensed physician.~~

~~(b)(1) On or after the effective date of this act, the secretary of health and environment shall commence the inspection of registered family day care homes pursuant to K.S.A. 65-533, and amendments thereto.~~

(2) The secretary of health and environment shall conduct an inspection of any child care facility upon receiving a complaint. Any new child care facility shall be inspected prior to issuance of a license. The secretary may conduct an inspection of any child care facility that has a record of repeated complaints or serious violations at any time. *Every 12 months*, the secretary shall inspect any child care facility that provides services to military families receiving military assistance for child care ~~every 12 months.~~

~~(c) (1) Except as provided in subsection (b)(2), the following~~

~~categories of child care facilities which were in compliance on the effective date of this act are not required to be inspected until July 1, 2011: Day care homes, as defined in K.A.R. 28-4-113; group day care homes, as defined in K.A.R. 28-4-113; child care centers, as defined in K.A.R. 28-4-420; preschools, as defined in K.A.R. 28-4-420; school-age programs, as defined in K.A.R. 28-4-576; and drop-in programs, as defined in K.A.R. 28-4-700. The secretary shall create a surveyor certification and provide a minimum of yearly continuing education to qualify for such certification.~~

(2) If a surveyor fails to comply with the certification requirements established by the secretary as provided in paragraph (1), the secretary may require such surveyor to complete an improvement plan.

(3) If such surveyor does not satisfactorily complete the improvement plan, the secretary may terminate such surveyor's current certification.

(d) Persons conducting inspections and surveys pursuant to K.S.A. 65-501 et seq., and amendments thereto, shall hold a certification issued by the secretary.

Sec. 46. K.S.A. 2024 Supp. 65-516 is hereby amended to read as follows: 65-516. (a) No person shall knowingly maintain a child care facility if an employee who, in this state or in other states or the federal government:

(1) (A) Has been convicted of a crime that is classified as a person felony under the Kansas criminal code;

(B) has been convicted of a felony under K.S.A. 2010 Supp. 21-36a01 through 21-36a17, prior to their transfer, or article 57 of chapter 21 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto, or any felony violation of any provision of the uniform controlled substances act prior to July 1, 2009;

(C) has been convicted of any act that is described in articles 34, 35 or 36 of chapter 21 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, prior to their repeal, or article 54, 55 or 56 of chapter 21 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, *and amendments thereto*, or K.S.A. 21-6104, 21-6325, 21-6326, 21-6418 through 21-6422 or 21-6424, and amendments thereto, or been convicted of an attempt under K.S.A. 21-3301, prior to its repeal, or K.S.A. 21-5301, and amendments thereto, to commit any such act or been convicted of conspiracy under K.S.A. 21-3302, prior to its repeal, or K.S.A. 21-5302, and amendments thereto, to commit such act, or similar statutes of any other state or the federal government;

(D) has been convicted of any act that is described in K.S.A. 21-4301 or 21-4301a, prior to their repeal, or K.S.A. 21-6401, and amendments thereto, or similar statutes of any other state or the federal government; or

(E) has been convicted of any act that is described in K.S.A. 21-3718 or 21-3719, prior to their repeal, or K.S.A. 21-5812, and amendments thereto, or similar statutes of any other state or the federal government;

(2) except as provided in subsection (b), has been adjudicated a juvenile offender because of having committed an act ~~that~~ *which*, if ~~done~~ *committed* by an adult, would constitute the commission of a felony and that is a crime against persons, is any act described in articles 34, 35 or 36 of chapter 21 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, prior to their repeal, or article 54, 55 or 56 of chapter 21 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, *and amendments thereto*, or K.S.A. 21-6104, 21-6325, 21-6326, 21-6418 through 21-6422 or 21-6424, and amendments thereto, or similar statutes of any other state or the federal government, or is any act described in K.S.A. 21-4301 or 21-4301a, prior to their repeal, or K.S.A. 21-6401, and amendments thereto, or similar statutes of any other state or the federal government;

(3) has been convicted or adjudicated of a crime that requires registration as a sex offender under the Kansas offender registration act, K.S.A. 22-4901 et seq., and amendments thereto, as a sex offender in

any other state or as a sex offender on the national sex offender registry;

(4) has committed an act of physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect or sexual abuse and who is listed in the child abuse and neglect registry maintained by the Kansas department for children and families pursuant to K.S.A. 38-2226, and amendments thereto, or any similar child abuse and neglect registries maintained by any other state or the federal government and:

(A) The person has failed to successfully complete a corrective action plan that had been deemed appropriate and approved by the Kansas department for children and families or requirements of similar entities in any other state or the federal government; or

(B) the record has not been expunged pursuant to rules and regulations adopted by the secretary for children and families or similar entities in any other state or the federal government;

(5) has had a child removed from home based on a court order pursuant to K.S.A. 38-2251, and amendments thereto, in this state, or a court order in any other state based upon a similar statute that finds the child to be deprived or a child in need of care based on a finding of physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect or sexual abuse and the child has not been returned to the home or the child reaches majority before being returned to the home and the person has failed to satisfactorily complete a corrective action plan approved by the department of health and environment;

(6) has had parental rights terminated pursuant to the ~~Kansas juvenile code or K.S.A. 38-2266 through 38-2270, and amendments thereto~~ revised *Kansas code for care of children*, or a similar statute of other states;

(7) has signed a diversion agreement pursuant to K.S.A. 22-2906 et seq., and amendments thereto, or an immediate intervention agreement pursuant to K.S.A. 38-2346, and amendments thereto, involving a charge of child abuse or a sexual offense; or

(8) has an infectious or contagious disease.

(b) If the secretary determines *that* there is no safety concern, the secretary may license a family foster home, as defined in K.S.A. 38-134, and amendments thereto, when a person who has been adjudicated as a juvenile offender for an offense described in subsection (a)(2):

(1) Was a child in the custody of the secretary and placed with such family foster home by the secretary;

(2) is 18 years of age or older;

(3) (A) maintains residence at such family foster home; or

(B) has been legally adopted by any person who resides at such family foster home; and

(4) six months have passed since the date of adjudication.

(c) No person shall maintain a child care facility if such person has been found to be a person in need of a guardian or a conservator, or both, as provided in K.S.A. 59-3050 through 59-3095, and amendments thereto.

(d) Any person who resides in a child care facility and who has been found to be in need of a guardian or a conservator, or both, shall be counted in the total number of children allowed in care.

(e) In accordance with the provisions of this subsection, the secretary of health and environment shall have access to any court orders or adjudications of any court of record, any records of such orders or adjudications, criminal history record information including, but not limited to, diversion agreements, in the possession of the Kansas bureau of investigation and any report of investigations as authorized by K.S.A. 38-2226, and amendments thereto, in the possession of the Kansas department for children and families or court of this state concerning employees in a child care facility. The secretary shall have access to these records for the purpose of determining whether or not the home meets the requirements of K.S.A. 59-2132, 65-503, 65-508 and 65-516, and amendments thereto.

(f) In accordance with the provisions of this subsection, the

secretary is authorized to conduct national criminal history record checks to determine criminal history on employees in a child care facility. In order to conduct a national criminal history check the secretary shall require fingerprinting for identification and determination of criminal history in accordance with K.S.A. 2024 Supp. 22-4714, and amendments thereto.

~~(g)~~ (1) The secretary shall adopt rules and regulations ~~on or before January 1, 2019,~~ to fix a fee for fingerprinting ~~persons residing, working or regularly volunteering~~ employees in a child care facility, as may be required by the department to reimburse the department for the cost of the fingerprinting.

(2) The secretary shall remit all moneys received from the fees established under this section to the state treasurer in accordance with ~~the provisions of~~ K.S.A. 75-4215, and amendments thereto. Upon receipt of each such remittance, the state treasurer shall deposit the entire amount in the state treasury to the credit of the child care criminal background and fingerprinting fund.

~~(h)~~ (h) The child care criminal background and fingerprinting fund is hereby created in the state treasury to be administered by the secretary of health and environment. All moneys credited to the child care criminal background and fingerprinting fund shall be used to pay local and state law enforcement officers and agencies for the processing of fingerprints and criminal history background checks for the department. All expenditures from the child care criminal background and fingerprinting fund shall be made in accordance with appropriation acts upon warrants of the director of accounts and reports issued pursuant to vouchers approved by the secretary or by a person designated by the secretary.

~~(i)~~ (i) The secretary shall notify the child care applicant or licensee, within seven days by certified mail with return receipt requested, when the result of the national criminal history record check or other appropriate review reveals unfitness specified in subsections (a)(1) through (8) with regard to the person who is the subject of the review.

~~(j)~~ (j) No child care facility or the employees thereof, shall be liable for civil damages to any person refused employment or discharged from employment by reason of such facility's or home's compliance with the provisions of this section if such home acts in good faith to comply with this section.

~~(k)~~ (k) For the purpose of subsection (a)(3), a person listed in the child abuse and neglect central registry shall not be prohibited from residing, working or volunteering in a child care facility unless such person has:

- (1) Had an opportunity to be interviewed and present information during the investigation of the alleged act of abuse or neglect; and
- (2) been given notice of the agency decision and an opportunity to appeal such decision to the secretary and to the courts pursuant to the Kansas judicial review act.

~~(m)~~ (l) In regard to Kansas issued criminal history records:

(1) The secretary of health and environment shall provide in writing information available to the secretary to each child placement agency requesting information under this section, including the information provided by the Kansas bureau of investigation pursuant to this section, for the purpose of assessing the fitness of persons living, working or regularly volunteering in a family foster home under the child placement agency's sponsorship.

(2) The child placement agency is considered to be a governmental entity and the designee of the secretary of health and environment for the purposes of obtaining, using and disseminating information obtained under this section.

(3) The information shall be provided to the child placement agency regardless of whether the information discloses that the subject of the request has been convicted of any offense.

(4) Whenever the information available to the secretary reveals that the subject of the request has no criminal history on record, the

secretary shall provide notice thereof in writing to each child placement agency requesting information under this section.

(5) Any staff person of a child placement agency who receives information under this subsection shall keep such information confidential, except that the staff person may disclose such information on a need-to-know basis to:

- (A) The person who is the subject of the request for information;
- (B) the applicant or operator of the family foster home in which the person lives, works or regularly volunteers;
- (C) the department of health and environment;
- (D) the Kansas department for children and families;
- (E) the department of corrections; and
- (F) the courts.

(6) A violation of the provisions of paragraph (5) shall be an unclassified misdemeanor punishable by a fine of \$100 for each violation.

~~(n)~~(m) (1) No person shall maintain a day care facility unless such person is a high school graduate or the equivalent thereof, except where extraordinary circumstances exist, the secretary of health and environment may exercise discretion to make exceptions to this requirement. The provisions of this subsection shall not apply to any person who was maintaining a day care facility on the day immediately prior to July 1, 2010, or who had an application for an initial license or the renewal of an existing license pending on July 1, 2010.

(2) *This subsection shall expire on June 30, 2026.*

Sec. 47. K.S.A. 65-527 is hereby amended to read as follows: 65-527. (a) As used in this section:

(1) ~~"Drop-in program" means a child care facility that is not located in an individual's residence, that serves exclusively school-age children and youth and where the operator permits children and youth to arrive at and depart from the program at the child or youth's own volition at unscheduled times.~~ "Child" means an individual who is enrolled or attending kindergarten, is less than 18 years of age, is not a volunteer or employee and is attending a youth development program.

(2) "Premises" means the location, including the building and adjoining grounds, for which the applicant has a temporary permit or license to conduct a youth development program.

~~(2)~~(3) "Public recreation center" means any building used by a political or taxing subdivision of this state, or by an agency of such subdivision, for recreation programs that serve children who are less than 18 years of age.

~~(3)~~(4) "School" means any building used for instruction of students enrolled in kindergarten or any of the grades one through 12 by a school district or an accredited nonpublic school.

~~(4)~~(5) "School-age program" means a child care facility that serves exclusively school-age children and youth but does not include a ~~drop-in~~ youth development program.

(6) "Youth development program" means a child care facility where youth activities are conducted that is not located in an individual's residence and that serves children who are enrolled in kindergarten to less than 18 years of age.

(b) No license for a ~~drop-in~~ youth development program or school-age program shall be denied, suspended or revoked on the basis that the building does not meet the requirements for licensure if the building:

(1) Is a public recreation center or school and is used by school-age children and youth *that are of the same age as children and youth who are cared for in the drop-in a youth development program or school-age program;*

(2) complies, during all hours of operation of ~~the drop-in a youth development program or school-age program~~, with the Kansas fire prevention code or a building code that is by law deemed to comply with the Kansas fire prevention code; and

(3) complies, except as provided in subsection (c), during all hours of operation of ~~the drop-in a youth development program or school-age~~

program, with all local building code provisions that apply to recreation centers; if the building is a public recreation center; or to schools; if the building is a school.

(c) If the standards that a building is required to comply with pursuant to subsections (b)(2) and (b)(3) conflict or are otherwise inconsistent, then the standards provided by subsection (b)(2) shall control.

(d) No license for a ~~drop-in~~ youth development program or school-age program that operates in accordance with subsection (b)(1) shall be denied, suspended or revoked based on an environmental deficiency and shall be approved or renewed if:

(1) The environmental deficiency does not pose an imminent risk to children and youth;

(2) the environmental deficiency is outside the applicant's or licensee's immediate authority to correct; and

(3) the applicant or licensee has notified the public recreation center or school of the environmental deficiency.

(e) *Whenever drop-in program or words of like effect, are referred to or designated by any statute, rule or regulation, contract or any other document, such reference or designation shall apply to a youth development program.*

(f) *If a licensed youth development program or school age program operates on or within the premises of a public or private school that is required to pass a fire safety inspection each school year pursuant to K.S.A. 31-144(b), and amendments thereto, no additional fire safety inspection of the licensed youth development program or school age program shall be required by the director, the state fire marshal, the fire chief or any local political or taxing subdivision.*

(g) *This section shall expire on June 30, 2026.*

Sec. 48. K.S.A. 65-531 is hereby amended to read as follows: 65-531. ~~On and after July 1, 1996:~~ (a) Except as provided further, information and records ~~which~~ that pertain to the immunization status of persons against childhood diseases as required by K.S.A. 65-508, and amendments thereto, may be disclosed and exchanged without a parent or guardian's written release authorizing such disclosure, to the following, who need to know such information to assure compliance with state statutes or to achieve ~~age-appropriate~~ age-appropriate immunization status for children:

(1) Employees of public agencies or departments;

(2) health records staff of child care facilities, including, but not limited to, facilities licensed by the secretary of health and environment;

(3) persons other than public employees who are entrusted with the regular care of those under the care and custody of a state agency, including, but not limited to, ~~operators of day care facilities~~, group homes, residential care facilities and adoptive or foster homes; and

(4) ~~health care~~ healthcare professionals.

(b) Notwithstanding K.S.A. 60-427, and amendments thereto, or any other Kansas statute ~~which~~ that provides for privileged information between a patient and a ~~health care~~ healthcare provider, there shall be no privilege preventing the furnishing of information and records as authorized by this section by any ~~health care~~ healthcare provider.

(c) Information and records ~~which~~ that pertain to the immunization status of persons against childhood diseases as required by K.S.A. 65-508, and amendments thereto, whose parent or guardian has submitted a written statement of *sincerely held* religious ~~objection to beliefs regarding~~ immunization as provided in K.S.A. 65-508, and amendments thereto, may not be disclosed or exchanged without a parent or guardian's written release authorizing such disclosure.

Sec. 49. On and after July 1, 2026, K.S.A. 72-4161 is hereby amended to read as follows: 72-4161. As used in this act:

(a) "Board" means the board of education of any school district.

(b) "Director" means the director of the Kansas office of early childhood.

(c) *"Infant" or "toddler" means any child under the age of eligibility for school attendance.*

(d) *"Parent education program" means a program developed and operated by a board for the purpose of providing expectant parents and parents of infants or toddlers or both with information, advice, assistance, resource materials, guidance and learning experiences regarding such measures as parenting skills and the various styles of parenting, the processes and principles of growth and development of children, home learning activities designed for infants and toddlers, techniques emphasizing a positive approach to discipline, effective methods of communicating and interacting with children to foster the development of self-esteem, strategies for structuring behavioral limits and increasing mutual positive regard and other elements of effective parenting that are conducive to the structuring of a home environment in which children are encouraged to be successful and productive learners.*

(e) *"School district" means any public school district organized and operating under the laws of this state.*

~~(e) "Parent education program" means a program developed and operated by a board for the purpose of providing expectant parents and parents of infants or toddlers or both with information, advice, assistance, resource materials, guidance and learning experiences regarding such measures as parenting skills and the various styles of parenting, the processes and principles of growth and development of children, home learning activities designed for infants and toddlers, techniques emphasizing a positive approach to discipline, effective methods of communicating and interacting with children so as to foster the development of self-esteem, strategies for structuring behavioral limits and increasing mutual positive regard, and other elements of effective parenting that are conducive to the structuring of a home environment in which children are encouraged to be successful and productive learners.~~

~~(d) "Infant" and "toddler" means any child under the age of eligibility for school attendance.~~

~~(e) "State board" means the state board of education.~~

Sec. 50. On and after July 1, 2026, K.S.A. 72-4162 is hereby amended to read as follows: 72-4162. (a) The board of every school district may:

- (1) Develop and operate a parent education program;
- (2) enter into cooperative or interlocal agreements with one or more other boards for the development and operation of a parent education program;
- (3) contract with private, nonprofit corporations or associations or with any public or private agency or institution, whether located within or outside the state, for the provision of services ~~which that~~ are appropriate to a parent education program; and
- (4) apply for a grant of state moneys to supplement amounts expended by the school district for development and operation of a parent education program.

(b) In order to be eligible to receive a grant of state moneys for the development and operation of a parent education program, a board shall submit to the ~~state board~~ *director* an application for a grant and a description of the program. The application and description shall be prepared in such form and manner as the ~~state board~~ *director* shall require and shall be submitted at a time to be determined and specified by the ~~state board~~ *director*. Approval by the ~~state board~~ *director* of the program and the application is prerequisite to the award of a grant.

(c) Each board ~~which that~~ is awarded a grant under this act shall make such periodic and special reports of statistical and financial information to the ~~state board~~ *as it the director* may request.

Sec. 51. On and after July 1, 2026, K.S.A. 72-4163 is hereby amended to read as follows: 72-4163. (a) The state board, *in consultation with the secretary for children and families and the director of early childhood*, shall adopt rules and regulations for the

administration of this act and shall:

(1) Establish standards and criteria for reviewing, evaluating and approving parent education programs and applications of school districts for grants;

(2) conduct a needs-assessment survey of school districts applying for grants;

(3) evaluate and approve parent education programs;

(4) establish priorities in accordance with the findings of the needs-assessment survey for the award of grants to school districts and for determination of the amount of such grants;

(5) be responsible for awarding grants to school districts; and

(6) request of and receive from each school district ~~which~~ *that* is awarded a grant for development and operation of a parent education program reports containing information with regard to the effectiveness of the program.

(b) In evaluating and approving parent education programs for the award of grants to school districts, the ~~state board~~ *director* shall consider:

(1) Prior experiences of school districts in the development and operation of parent education programs;

(2) level of effort exhibited by school districts in the development and operation of parent education programs;

(3) the amounts budgeted by school districts for the development and operation of parent education programs; and

(4) the potential effectiveness of the parent education programs for which applications for the grant of state moneys are made.

Sec. 52. On and after July 1, 2026, K.S.A. 72-4164 is hereby amended to read as follows: 72-4164. (a) ~~(1) In the 1990-91 school year, to the extent that appropriations are available therefor, and on the basis of established priorities, the state board shall select for the award of grants of state moneys those school districts, not to exceed 100 school districts, which the state board determines to be most capable of developing and operating successful parent education programs.~~

~~(2) In the 1991-92 school year, to the extent that appropriations are available therefor, and on the basis of established priorities, the state board shall select for the award of grants of state moneys those school districts, not to exceed 200 school districts, which the state board determines to be most capable of developing and operating successful parent education programs.~~

~~(3) In the 1992-93 school year and~~ In each school year thereafter, to the extent that appropriations are available therefor, each school district ~~which~~ *that* has developed and is operating an approved parent education program shall be eligible to receive a grant of state moneys.

(b) The amount of a grant *awarded* to a school district shall be determined by the ~~state board~~ *director* in accordance with established priorities *and reported to the senate committee on education and the house of representatives committee on K-12 budget, or any successor committees*, but in no event shall such amount exceed the amount of actual expenses incurred by the school district in the development and operation of a program. If the amount of appropriations for parent education programs is insufficient to pay in full the amount *that* each school district is determined to be eligible to receive, the ~~state board~~ *director* shall prorate the amount appropriated among all school districts in proportion to the amount *that* each such school district is determined to be eligible to receive.

(c) *Any grant awarded under this section shall be included in district budgets with proper notation of such grant awarded.*

(d) *Review of equity for pre-K programs shall be reviewed by committees on a bi-annual basis.*

Sec. 53. On and after July 1, 2026, K.S.A. 72-4166 is hereby amended to read as follows: 72-4166. The ~~state board~~ *director*, in cooperation with ~~the Kansas department for children and families, the state department of health and environment, and other~~ appropriate associations and organizations, may provide any board, upon its request

therefor, with technical advice and assistance regarding the development and operation of a parent education program or an application for a grant of state moneys; and may make studies and gather and disseminate information regarding materials, resources, procedures and personnel—~~which~~ *that* are or may become available to assist school districts in the development and operation of parent education programs.

Sec. 54. K.S.A. 38-1901, 38-2103, 65-501, 65-505, 65-508, 65-512, 65-527 and 65-531 and K.S.A. 2024 Supp. 48-3406, 65-503 and 65-516 are hereby repealed.

Sec. 55. On and after July 1, 2026, K.S.A. 65-504, 72-4161, 72-4162, 72-4163, 72-4164 and 72-4166 are hereby repealed.

Sec. 56. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the statute book.

I hereby certify that the above BILL originated in the HOUSE, and was adopted by that body

HOUSE adopted
Conference Committee Report_____

Speaker of the House.

Chief Clerk of the House.

Passed the SENATE
as amended _____

SENATE adopted
Conference Committee Report_____

President of the Senate.

Secretary of the Senate.

APPROVED _____

Governor.

K.S.A. 38-1901. Kansas children's cabinet; membership and terms; qualifications; substantial interests prohibited; duties; expense allowances. On and after the effective date of this act:

(a) The advisory committee on children and families is hereby redesignated and shall be known and referred to as the Kansas children's cabinet.

(b) The Kansas children's cabinet shall consist of 15 members as follows: (1) The secretary of health and environment, or the secretary's designee; (2) the secretary for children and families, or the secretary's designee; (3) a member of the state board of regents selected by the state board of regents, or such member's designee; (4) the commissioner of education, or the commissioner's designee; (5) the commissioner of juvenile justice, or the commissioner's designee; (6) a member of the Kansas supreme court selected by the Kansas supreme court, or such member's designee; (7) five members of the public who are interested in and knowledgeable about the needs of children and families shall be appointed by the governor, which, subject to the provisions of subsection (e), may include persons who are children's advocates, members of organizations with experience in programs that benefit children or other individuals who have experience with children's programs and services; (8) one person appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives; (9) one person appointed by the minority leader of the house of representatives; (10) one person appointed by the president of the senate; and (11) one person appointed by the minority leader of the senate. The members designated by clauses (1), (2), (3), (4), (5) and (6) of this subsection shall be nonvoting members of the Kansas children's cabinet. All other members shall be voting members.

(c) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, the members of the Kansas children's cabinet appointed by the governor, speaker, president and minority leaders shall serve for terms of four years and until their successors are appointed and qualified. The governor shall appoint a chairperson of the committee from among the members appointed by the governor. The chairperson shall serve in such office throughout such member's current term of office and until a successor is appointed and qualified. The members of the Kansas children's cabinet may elect any additional officers from among its members necessary to carry out the duties and functions of the Kansas children's cabinet.

(2) Of the members first appointed by the governor, two shall be appointed for terms of two years, two shall be appointed for terms of three years and the member selected by the governor to be the chairperson shall be appointed for a term of four years. The member first appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives shall be appointed for a term of one year, the member first appointed by the minority leader of the house of representatives shall be appointed for a term of two years, the member first appointed by the president of the senate shall be appointed for a term of three years and the member first appointed by the minority leader of the senate shall be appointed for a term of four years. The governor shall designate the term for which each of the members first appointed by the governor shall serve.

(3) All members appointed to fill vacancies in the membership of the Kansas children's cabinet and all members appointed to succeed members appointed to membership on the Kansas children's cabinet shall be appointed in like manner as that provided for the original appointment of the member succeeded. All members appointed to fill vacancies of a member of the Kansas children's cabinet appointed by the governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, the minority leader of the house of representatives, the president of the senate or the minority leader of the senate shall be appointed to fill the unexpired term of such member.

(d) Not more than three members of the Kansas children's cabinet appointed by the governor under subsection (b)(7) shall be members of the same political party.

(e) (1) No person shall serve on the Kansas children's cabinet if such person has knowingly acquired a substantial interest in any business. Any such person who knowingly acquires such an interest shall vacate such member's position on the Kansas children's cabinet.

(2) For purposes of this subsection, "substantial interest" means any of the following:

(A) If an individual or an individual's spouse, either individually or collectively, has owned within the preceding 12 months a legal or equitable interest exceeding \$5,000 or 5% of any business, whichever is less, the individual has a substantial interest in that business.

(B) If an individual or an individual's spouse, either individually or collectively, has received during the preceding calendar year compensation which is or will be required to be included as taxable income on federal income tax returns of the individual and spouse in an aggregate amount of \$2,000 from any business or combination of businesses, the individual has a substantial interest in that business or combination of businesses.

(C) If an individual or an individual's spouse holds the position of officer, director, associate, partner or proprietor of any business, the individual has a substantial interest in that business, irrespective of that amount of compensation received by the individual or the individual's spouse.

(D) If an individual or an individual's spouse receives compensation which is a portion or percentage of each separate fee or commission paid to a business or combination of businesses, the individual has a substantial interest in any client or customer who pays fees or commissions to the business or combination of businesses from which fees or commissions the individual or the individual's spouse, either individually or collectively, received an aggregate of \$2,000 or more in the preceding calendar year.

(3) As used in this subsection, "client or customer" means a business or combination of businesses.

(4) As used in this subsection, "business" means any entity which is eligible to receive funds from the children's initiatives fund, as provided in K.S.A. 38-2102, and amendments thereto, from the children's initiatives accountability fund, established by K.S.A. 38-2103, and amendments thereto, or from the family and children trust account of the family and children investment fund, as provided in K.S.A. 38-1808, and amendments thereto.

(f) The Kansas children's cabinet shall meet upon the call of the chairperson as necessary to carry out the duties and functions of the Kansas children's cabinet. A quorum of the Kansas children's cabinet shall be five voting members.

(g) The Kansas children's cabinet shall have and perform the following functions:

(1) Assist the governor in developing and implementing a coordinated, comprehensive service delivery system to serve the children and families of Kansas;

(2) identify barriers to service and gaps in service due to strict definitions of boundaries between departments and agencies;

(3) facilitate interagency and interdepartmental cooperation toward the common goal of serving children and families;

(4) investigate and identify methodologies for the combining of funds across departmental boundaries to better serve children and families;

(5) propose actions needed to achieve coordination of funding and services across departmental lines;

(6) encourage and facilitate joint planning and coordination between the public and private sectors to better serve the needs of children and families; and

(7) perform the duties and functions prescribed by K.S.A. 38-2103, and amendments thereto.

(h) Members of the Kansas children's cabinet shall not be paid compensation, but shall receive subsistence allowances, mileage and other expenses as provided by K.S.A. 75-3223, and amendments thereto. The subsistence allowances, mileage and other expenses as provided in K.S.A. 75-3223, and amendments thereto, shall be paid from available appropriations of the Kansas department for children and families except that expenses of members who are employed by a state agency shall be reimbursed by that state agency.

(i) On the effective date of this act, the advisory committee on children and families is hereby abolished and all powers, duties, functions, records and other property of the advisory committee on children and families are hereby transferred to the Kansas children's cabinet created by this section. Except as otherwise specifically provided by this act, the Kansas children's cabinet shall be a continuation of the advisory committee on children and families as it existed prior to the effective date of this act.

History: L. 1997, ch. 156, § 34; L. 1999, ch. 172, § 8; L. 2014, ch. 115, § 59; July 1.

K.S.A. 38-2101. Kansas endowment for youth fund; tobacco litigation settlement agreement proceeds, disposition; investment, management and administration of fund.

(a) There is hereby established in the state treasury the Kansas endowment for youth fund which shall constitute a trust fund and shall be invested, managed and administered in accordance with the provisions of this act by the board of trustees of the Kansas public employees retirement system established by K.S.A. 74-4905, and amendments thereto.

(b) All of the moneys received by the state pursuant to the tobacco litigation settlement agreements entered into by the attorney general on behalf of the state of Kansas, or pursuant to any judgment rendered, regarding the litigation against tobacco industry companies and related entities, shall be deposited in the state treasury and credited to the Kansas endowment for youth fund. All such moneys shall constitute an endowment which shall remain credited to the Kansas endowment for youth fund except as provided in this section or in K.S.A. 38-2102,

and amendments thereto, for transfers to the children's initiatives fund. Expenditures may be made from the Kansas endowment for youth fund for the payment of the operating expenses of the Kansas children's cabinet and the board of trustees, including the expenses of investing and managing the moneys, which are attributable to the Kansas endowment for youth fund. All moneys credited to the Kansas endowment for youth fund shall be invested to provide an ongoing source of investment earnings available for periodic transfer to the children's initiatives fund in accordance with this act. All expenditures from the Kansas endowment for youth fund shall be made in accordance with appropriation acts upon warrants of the director of accounts and reports issued pursuant to vouchers approved by the chairperson of the board of trustees of the Kansas public employees retirement system or by the chairperson's designee.

(c) On the effective date of this act, the director of accounts and reports shall transfer all moneys credited to the children's health care programs fund to the Kansas endowment for youth fund and the children's health care programs fund is hereby abolished. On and after July 1, 1999, whenever the children's health care programs fund, or words of like effect, is referred to or designated by statute, contract or other document, such reference or designation shall be deemed to apply to the Kansas endowment for youth fund.

History: L. 1999, ch. 172, § 1; July 1.

K.S.A. 38-2102. Children's initiatives fund; purposes; requirements for funded programs; transfers from Kansas endowment for youth fund, adjustments for increased or reduced tobacco litigation settlement agreement proceeds.

(a) There is hereby established in the state treasury the children's initiatives fund which shall be administered in accordance with this section and the provisions of appropriation acts.

(b) All moneys credited to the children's initiatives fund shall be used for the purposes of providing additional funding for programs, projects, improvements, services and other purposes directly or indirectly beneficial to the physical and mental health, welfare, safety and overall well-being of children in Kansas as provided by appropriation or other acts of the legislature. In allocating or appropriating moneys in the children's initiatives fund, the legislature shall emphasize programs and services that are data-driven and outcomes-based and may emphasize programs and services that are generally directed toward improving the lives of children and youth by combating community-identified risk factors associated with children and youth becoming involved in tobacco, alcohol, drugs or juvenile delinquency. Programs funded must have a clearly articulated objective to be achieved with any funds received. As a condition precedent to funding, every program must demonstrate that the program's design is supported by credible research, that the program as implemented will constitute best practices in the field, that data is available to benchmark the program's desired outcomes and that an evaluation and assessment component is part of the program design and that such evaluation is capable of determining program performance, needed program modifications to enhance performance, ways in which the program could be modified for transfer to other venues, and when performance no longer justifies funding. Community-based programs must demonstrate the availability of sufficient community leadership and the capacity to appropriately implement and administer the program that is funded. Programs which require community mobilization to successfully achieve program objectives must demonstrate a specific strategy to obtain the requisite levels of community mobilization. Moneys allocated or appropriated from the children's initiatives fund shall not be used to replace or substitute for moneys appropriated from the state general fund in the immediately preceding fiscal year.

(c) All expenditures from the children's initiatives fund shall be made in accordance with appropriation acts upon warrants of the director of accounts and reports issued pursuant to vouchers approved in the manner prescribed by law.

(d) (1) On July 1, 2000, or as soon thereafter as moneys are available, the director of accounts and reports shall transfer, in the following order of priority, (A) first, \$70,740,000 from the Kansas endowment for youth fund to the state general fund and (B) second, \$30,000,000 from the Kansas endowment for youth fund to the children's initiatives fund.

(2) On July 1, 2001, or as soon thereafter as moneys are available, the director of accounts and reports shall transfer \$40,000,000 from the Kansas endowment for youth fund to the children's initiatives fund and shall transfer \$10,000,000 from the Kansas endowment for youth fund to the state general fund.

(3) On July 1, 2002, or as soon thereafter as moneys are available, the director of accounts and reports shall transfer \$45,000,000 from the Kansas endowment for youth fund to the children's initiatives fund.

(4) On July 1 of each fiscal year thereafter, or as soon thereafter as moneys are available, the director of accounts and reports shall transfer from the Kansas endowment for youth fund to the children's initiatives fund the amount equal to 102.5% of the amount transferred from the Kansas endowment for youth fund to the children's initiatives fund pursuant to this section during the immediately preceding fiscal year.

(5) If the amounts to be received during any fiscal year under the tobacco litigation settlement agreements entered into by the attorney general on behalf of the state of Kansas, or pursuant to any judgment rendered, regarding the litigation against tobacco industry companies and related entities, are reduced or increased from the amount that was anticipated to be received for such fiscal year, as of the time the settlement agreements were entered into, then the legislature may adjust the amount otherwise provided by this subsection to be transferred from the Kansas endowment for youth fund to the children's initiatives fund for such fiscal year by including provisions in appropriation acts for such fiscal year that proportionally reduce or increase, as appropriate, the amount otherwise provided by this subsection to be transferred from the Kansas endowment for youth fund to the children's initiatives fund for such fiscal year. In addition, for purposes of circumstances related to the investment of moneys in the Kansas endowment for youth fund or other circumstances or matters deemed sufficient by the legislature, the legislature may adjust the amount otherwise provided by this subsection to be transferred from the Kansas endowment for youth fund to the children's initiatives fund for any fiscal year by including provisions in appropriation acts for such fiscal year that proportionally reduce or increase, as appropriate, the amount otherwise provided by this subsection to be transferred from the Kansas endowment for youth fund to the children's initiatives fund for such fiscal year.

(e) It is the intent of the legislature that, except as provided by this section, no amounts shall be transferred from the Kansas endowment for youth fund to the children's initiatives fund or to any other fund during any state fiscal year.

(f) On or before the 10th day of each month, the director of accounts and reports shall transfer from the state general fund to the Kansas endowment for youth fund interest earnings based on (1) the average daily balance of moneys in the children's initiatives fund for the preceding month and (2) the net earnings rate of the pooled money investment portfolio for the preceding month.

History: L. 1999, ch. 172, § 2; July 1.

K.S.A. 38-2103. Kansas children's cabinet, duties concerning children's initiatives fund; reviews, assessments and evaluations of uses of moneys; audits; children's initiatives accountability fund, interest. (a) The Kansas children's cabinet established by K.S.A. 38-1901, and amendments thereto, shall advise the governor and the legislature regarding the uses of the moneys credited to the children's initiatives fund.

(b) The Kansas children's cabinet shall review, assess and evaluate all uses of the moneys in the children's initiatives fund. The Kansas children's cabinet shall study and shall initiate studies, assessments and evaluations, by contract or otherwise, through institutions of higher education and other appropriate research entities to identify best practices and to measure and otherwise determine the efficiency and efficacy of practices that are utilized in programs, projects, improvements, services and other purposes for which moneys are allocated or appropriated from the children's initiatives fund. The costs of such reviews, assessments and evaluations shall be paid from the children's initiatives accountability fund.

(c) There shall be conducted performance audits and other audit work by the legislative post auditor upon request by the Kansas children's cabinet and as directed by the legislative post audit committee in accordance with the provisions of the legislative post audit act. The purpose of such performance audits and other audit work shall be to provide interested parties with the program evaluation and research needed to make informed decisions for the uses of moneys credited to the children's initiatives fund. The auditor to conduct such performance audit or other audit work shall be specified in accordance with K.S.A. 46-1122, and amendments thereto, and if the legislative post audit committee specifies under such statute that a firm, as defined by K.S.A. 46-1112, and amendments thereto, is to perform all or part of the audit work of such audit, such firm shall be selected and shall perform such audit work as provided in K.S.A. 46-1123, and amendments thereto, and K.S.A. 46-1125 through 46-1127, and amendments thereto. The audit work required pursuant to this subsection shall be

conducted in accordance with generally accepted governmental auditing standards. The post auditor shall compute the reasonably anticipated cost of the audit work performed by a firm for such performance audit or other audit work pursuant to this subsection, subject to review and approval by the contract audit committee established by K.S.A. 46-1120, and amendments thereto, and the Kansas children's cabinet shall pay such cost from the children's initiatives accountability fund. If all or part of the audit work for such performance audit or other audit work is performed by the division of post audit and the division of post audit incurs costs in addition to those attributable to the operations of the division of post audit in the performance of other duties and responsibilities, the post auditor shall charge the Kansas children's cabinet for such additional costs and the Kansas children's cabinet shall pay such charges from the children's initiatives accountability fund. The payment of any such costs and any such charges shall be a transaction between the division of post audit and the Kansas children's cabinet and such transaction shall be settled in accordance with the provisions of K.S.A. 75-5516, and amendments thereto. All moneys received by the division of post audit for such costs and charges shall be credited to the audit services fund.

(d) There is hereby established in the state treasury the children's initiatives accountability fund which shall be administered in accordance with this section and the provisions of appropriation acts. The governor shall recommend and the legislature shall provide for moneys to be credited annually to the children's initiatives accountability fund by transfers or other provisions of appropriation acts.

(e) All moneys credited to the children's initiatives accountability fund shall be used for the purposes of providing funding for assessment and evaluation of programs, projects, improvements, services and other purposes for which moneys are allocated or appropriated from the children's initiatives fund. All expenditures from the children's initiatives accountability fund shall be made in accordance with appropriation acts upon warrants of the director of accounts and reports issued pursuant to vouchers approved in the manner prescribed by law.

(f) On or before the 10th day of each month, the director of accounts and reports shall transfer from the state general fund to the Kansas endowment for youth fund interest earnings based on (1) the average daily balance of moneys in the children's initiatives accountability fund for the preceding month and (2) the net earnings rate of the pooled money investment portfolio for the preceding month.

History: L. 1999, ch. 172, § 3; July 1.

K.S.A. 38-2104. Management and investment of Kansas endowment for youth fund and family and children endowment account of the family and children investment fund; investment standards and objectives; contracts with investment advisors and other consultants, requirements.

(a) The board of trustees is responsible for the management and investment of the fund and shall discharge the board's duties with respect to the fund solely in the interests of the beneficiaries of the fund for the exclusive purpose of providing investment revenue for the purposes for which the moneys may be used and defraying reasonable expenses of administering the fund and shall invest and reinvest moneys in the fund and acquire, retain, manage, including the exercise of any voting rights and disposal of investments of the fund within the limitations and according to the powers, duties and purposes as prescribed by this section.

(b) Moneys in the fund shall be invested and reinvested to achieve the investment objective which is preservation of the fund to provide benefits to the beneficiaries of the fund and accordingly providing that the moneys are as productive as possible, subject to the standards set forth in this act. No moneys in the fund shall be invested or reinvested if the sole or primary investment objective is for economic development or social purposes or objectives.

(c) In investing and reinvesting moneys in the fund and in acquiring, retaining, managing and disposing of investments of the fund, the board of trustees shall exercise the judgment, care, skill, prudence and diligence under the circumstances then prevailing, which persons of prudence, discretion and intelligence acting in a like capacity and familiar with such matters would use in the conduct of an enterprise of like character and with like aims by diversifying the investments of the fund so as to minimize the risk of large losses, unless under the circumstances it is clearly prudent not to do so, and not in regard to speculation but in regard to the permanent disposition of similar funds, considering the probable income as well as the probable safety of their capital.

(d) In the discharge of such management and investment responsibilities the board of trustees may contract for the services of one or more professional investment advisors or other consultants in the management and investment of moneys in the fund and otherwise in the performance of the duties of the board of trustees under this act.

(e) The board of trustees shall require that each person contracted with under subsection (d) to provide services shall obtain commercial insurance which provides for errors and omissions coverage for such person in an amount to be specified by the board of trustees. The amount of such coverage specified by the board of trustees shall be at least the greater of \$500,000 or 1% of the funds entrusted to such person up to a maximum of \$10,000,000. The board of trustees shall require a person contracted with under subsection (d) to provide services give a fidelity bond in a penal sum as may be fixed by law or, if not so fixed, as may be fixed by the board of trustees, with corporate surety authorized to do business in this state. Such persons contracted with the board of trustees pursuant to subsection (d) and any persons contracted with such persons to perform the functions specified in subsection (b) shall be deemed to be fiduciary agents of the board of trustees in the performance of contractual obligations.

(f) (1) Subject to the objective set forth in subsection (b) and the standards set forth in subsection (c), the board of trustees shall formulate and adopt policies and objectives for the investment and reinvestment of moneys

in the fund and the acquisition, retention, management and disposition of investments of the fund. Such policies and objectives shall be in writing and shall include:

(A) Specific asset allocation standards and objectives;

(B) establishment of criteria for evaluating the risk versus the potential return on a particular investment; and

(C) a requirement that all investment advisors, and any managers or others with similar duties and responsibilities as investment advisors, shall immediately report all instances of default on investments to the board of trustees and provide such board of trustees with recommendations and options, including, but not limited to, curing the default or withdrawal from the investment.

(2) The board of trustees shall review such policies and objectives, make changes considered necessary or desirable and readopt such policies and objectives on an annual basis.

(g) (1) Except as provided in subsection (d) and this subsection, the custody of money and securities of the fund shall remain in the custody of the state treasurer, except that the board of trustees may arrange for the custody of such money and securities as it considers advisable with one or more member banks or trust companies of the federal reserve system or with one or more banks in the state of Kansas, or both, to be held in safekeeping by the banks or trust companies for the collection of the principal and interest or other income or of the proceeds of sale.

(2) The state treasurer and the board of trustees shall collect the principal and interest or other income of investments or the proceeds of sale of securities in the custody of the state treasurer and shall pay such moneys when so collected into the state treasury to the credit of the fund.

(3) The principal and interest or other income or the proceeds of sale of securities as provided in paragraph (1) of this subsection shall be reported to the state treasurer and the board of trustees and credited to the fund.

(h) All interest or other income of the investments of the moneys in the fund, after payment of any management fees, shall be considered income of the fund and shall be deposited in the state treasury to the credit of the fund.

(i) As used in this section:

(1) "Board of trustees" means the board of trustees of the Kansas public employees retirement system established by K.S.A. 74-4905 and amendments thereto.

(2) "Fiduciary" means a person who, with respect to the fund, is a person who:

(A) Exercises any discretionary authority with respect to administration of the fund;

(B) exercises any authority to invest or manage assets of the fund or has any authority or responsibility to do so;

(C) provides investment advice for a fee or other direct or indirect compensation with respect to the assets of the fund or has any authority or responsibility to do so;

(D) provides actuarial, accounting, auditing, consulting, legal or other professional services for a fee or other direct or indirect compensation with respect to the fund or has any authority or responsibility to do so; or

(E) is a member of the board of trustees or of the staff of the board of trustees.

(3) "Fund" means the Kansas endowment for youth fund and the family and the children endowment account of the family and children investment fund.

(4) With respect to the investment of moneys in the Kansas endowment for youth fund, "purposes for which the moneys may be used" means the purposes for which the moneys in the children's initiatives fund may be used, as provided in K.S.A. 38-2102, and amendments thereto, and "beneficiaries of the fund" means the beneficiaries of the children's initiatives fund, as provided by K.S.A. 38-2102, and amendments thereto.

(5) With respect to the investment of moneys in the family and children endowment account of the family and children investment fund, "purposes for which the moneys may be used" means the purposes for which the moneys in the family and children trust account of the family and children investment fund may be used, as provided in subsection (c) of K.S.A. 38-1808, and amendments thereto, and "beneficiaries of the fund" means the beneficiaries of the family and children trust account of the family and children investment fund may be used, as provided in subsection (c) of K.S.A. 38-1808, and amendments thereto.

History: L. 1999, ch. 172, § 4; July 1.

K.S.A. 38-2105. Reports to governor and legislature, actual and estimated receipts and investment earnings to Kansas endowment for youth fund. The board of trustees of the Kansas public employees retirement system shall report to the governor and to the legislature on the moneys credited to the Kansas endowment for youth fund and investment earnings thereon at least once each calendar quarter and on a monthly basis upon request of the governor, the president of the senate or the speaker of the house of representatives. In addition, the board of trustees shall submit a report on or before October 1 of each year to the director of the budget, the director of the legislative research department and the chairpersons of the senate committee on ways and means and the house of representatives committee on appropriations detailing the board's estimates as to the amounts of moneys that would be available for transfer from the Kansas endowment for youth fund to the children's initiatives fund during the ensuing fiscal year. The director of the budget and the governor shall use the information in such report in the preparation of the governor's budget report under K.S.A. 75-3721, and amendments thereto.

History: L. 1999, ch. 172, § 5; July 1.



BLUEPRINT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

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

MENTAL HEALTH & LIFE SKILLS

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**

DON HINEMAN
CHAIR

MELISSA ROOKER
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR



✕ @KCCTF

Landon State Office Building
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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.



Annual Report

➤ 2025

Don Hineman, Chair
Melissa Rooker, Executive Director

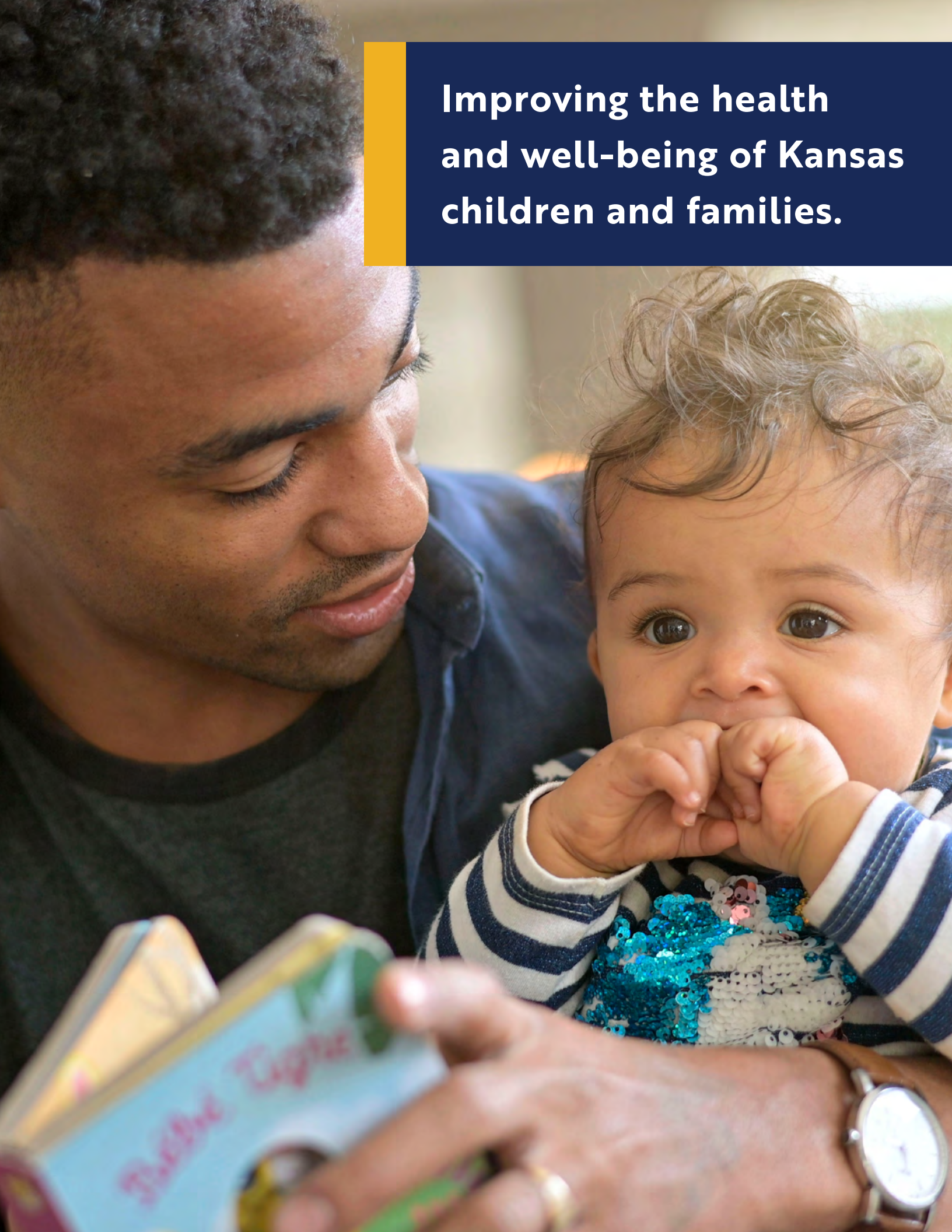


This report was prepared by the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research on behalf of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund.

The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund is housed within the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). The Kansas Children's Cabinet and KSDE do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in programs and activities and provide equal access to any group officially affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America and other designated youth groups. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: KSDE General Counsel, Office of General Counsel, KSDE, Landon State Office Building, 900 SW Jackson, Suite 102, Topeka, KS 66612, (785) 296-3204.

Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund. (2025). Annual report. Prepared by the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research of behalf of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund.

**Improving the health
and well-being of Kansas
children and families.**



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Introduction

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- Our Approach

Letter from the Director

This has been a momentous year for early childhood in Kansas. Generational investments in child care have resulted in new child care slots throughout the state for working families. An increased focus on early childhood mental health has spawned new cross-sector partnerships that are benefiting families with behavioral health care needs. Business and economic development leaders are taking the lead on new public-private partnerships to infuse resources into their local early childhood ecosystems. And we've put our state's latest Preschool Development Grant to work meeting the needs of early childhood professionals so they can keep doors open with the highest quality care for our youngest Kansans. We also achieved a major legislative accomplishment: the bipartisan House Bill 2045 established an Office of Early Childhood and redefined the membership of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund.

Kansas has long prioritized support for families with young children. We were the first state in the nation to establish a Children's Trust Fund in 1980 and first to establish a Children's Cabinet in 1999. In 2019, we established a cross-sector early childhood collaboration between four state agencies, known as All In For Kansas Kids, and produced a comprehensive statewide Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan for early childhood that has been guiding our efforts ever since. The Office of Early Childhood is the logical next step in this work to better meet the needs of Kansas children, families, providers, and community partners. Together, these milestones reflect our longstanding commitment as a state to improving the early childhood experiences for Kansas families, representing our goal of making early childhood service provision more efficient and more effective for everyone involved.

This year's report focuses on the Kansas Children's Cabinet strategic approach to meet our statutory responsibilities amidst changing conditions. We outline how our guiding principles aid us in creating an early childhood system that is responsive to the needs of children, families, and communities. This report provides information about each of the programs we manage, including how our funded work supports our strategic vision. Overseeing and evaluating use of the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF) is a core responsibility of the Kansas Children's Cabinet. Details about the work of CIF-funded programs directly administered by the Children's Cabinet and descriptions of CIF-funded programs administered by other agencies are provided. The Kansas Children's Cabinet also oversees a portfolio of federally funded initiatives. Grantee information for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Programs, and information about our other federally funded initiatives that work to support children, families, and the early childhood workforce is also provided.

As this report makes clear, our portfolio is a strong foundation for what we can achieve as a state, guided by the Blueprint for Early Childhood and our strategic vision: centering children and families at the heart of our work, partnering across programs and funding sources to meet changing needs, and setting the standard for transparency and accountability. The Office of Early Childhood is a critical next step.

We have a past to be proud of, but the future holds tremendous opportunity to strengthen our early childhood ecosystem and improve support for Kansas families. I look forward to working with you all to achieve our vision that **every child thrives**.



Our People

Kansas Children's Cabinet Members

FIVE VOTING MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR

Don Hineman, Chair

Dr. Tara D. Wallace

Dr. LeEtta Felter

Tabatha Rosproy

David Younger

SIX VOTING MEMBERS APPOINTED BY LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP

Sen. Renee Erickson
(Senate President appointee)

Rep. Kristey Williams
(Speaker of the House appointee)

Sen. Tory Marie Blew
(Senate Majority Leader appointee)

Rep. Laura Williams
(House Majority Leader appointee)

Sen. Dinah Sykes
(Senate Minority Leader appointee)

Rep. Suzanne Wikle
(House Minority Leader appointee)

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Laura Howard, J.D., Secretary, Kansas Department for Children and Families (Tanya Keys, Designee)

Dr. Blake Flanders, President & CEO, Kansas Board of Regents (Brandi Wells, Designee)

Melissa Standridge, J.D., Kansas Supreme Court Justice

Janet Stanek, Secretary, Kansas Department of Health & Environment (Derik Flerlage, Amy Dean-Campmire, Co-Designees)

Dr. Randy Watson, Commissioner of Education, Kansas State Department of Education (Amanda Petersen, Designee)

Jeff Zmuda, Secretary, Kansas Department of Corrections (Matthew Billinger, Designee)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE ON OUR BOARD

Dianne Owen Graham
2018-2025 Cabinet Member

Monica Murnan
2020-2025 Cabinet Member

Teri Rice
2017-2025 Cabinet Member

John Wilson
2019-2025 Cabinet Member

Karla Wiscombe
Kansas Board of Regents Designee

Kansas Children's Cabinet Staff

Melissa Rooker, Executive Director

Dyogga Adegbore, Program Consultant II

Craig Barnes, Assistant Director

Megan Brohaugh, Administrative Specialist

Melissa Schoenberger,
Early Childhood System Specialist

Christie Wyckoff, Early Childhood Coordinator

Read more about the board and staff on the [Kansas Children's Cabinet website](#).



Connector

Convenes partners in children's issues from government, nonprofit, and the private sector.

Champion

Elevates the importance of investing in early childhood and contributes to innovative program approaches.

Strategist

Identifies opportunities for effective collaboration and overcomes barriers to optimal system performance.

Evaluator

Evaluates use of the CIF, contributes to data-informed decision making, and offers practice and policy recommendations.

Manager

Manages grantmaking, fund administration, and strategic planning processes.

Our Commitment to 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.

The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund was created by the Kansas Legislature in 1999 to manage the Children's Initiatives Fund and assist in developing and coordinating a comprehensive early childhood system to serve children and families.

Decades of scientific research underscore the importance of such a system, one where every Kansas child has access to high-quality early childhood programs and experiences. We know that developing brains make more than a million neural connections each second from birth to age 3, and that more than 90% of a child's brain architecture is developed by age five. Early relationships, experiences, and environments form the foundation for healthy development, academic achievement, and a lifetime of benefits supporting our youngest learners into adulthood. Investing in high-quality early childhood programs provides the greatest return on investment for our children and has positive ripples for working families, employers and business leaders, and the economic vitality of Kansas communities.

Since its creation, the Kansas Children's Cabinet has been committed to improving the health, well-being, and educational outcomes of our youngest Kansans and their families by:

- Coordinating systems-wide approaches to ensure services are available and accessible across the early childhood ecosystem
- Using data in ethical, timely, and responsive ways in partnership with communities and a broad array of experts
- Elevating family voice and choice
- Expanding the reach of our programs to allow all families to access the services they want and need for their children

Our Approach

The Kansas Children's Cabinet is directed by statute to undertake these four overarching responsibilities:

- Advising the governor and the legislature regarding the use of money credited to the Children's Initiatives Fund
- Evaluating programs receiving Children's Initiatives Fund allocations
- Assisting the Governor and the legislature in developing and coordinating a comprehensive delivery system to serve children and families
- Supporting prevention of child abuse and neglect

To fulfill both our statutory responsibility and our commitment to Kansas children and families, the Kansas Children's Cabinet developed the **Blueprint for Early Childhood** (Blueprint). This visionary document serves as our state's framework for ensuring that every child thrives. It comprises three foundational building blocks.

Blueprint for Early Childhood

Foundational Building Blocks



Healthy Development

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



Strong Families

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



Early Learning

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

As a statutory leader in the Kansas early childhood ecosystem, the Kansas Children's Cabinet is also a champion for the [2024 All In For Kansas Kids Strategic Plan](#). This document charts the path forward for all of us who aim to ensure every child thrives. The five-year plan builds on our progress in recent years and is responsive to the needs of Kansas children, families, professionals, and communities as identified in the [2024 All In For Kansas Kids Needs Assessment](#). The plan articulates goals to strengthen collaboration between the full continuum of early childhood system partners, including state and local entities and public and private sectors; improve workforce capacity and support; and prioritize the needs and experiences of children and families throughout the system.

Guiding Principles

The work of the Kansas Children's Cabinet is focused on early childhood programs for children ages birth to 5 (including prenatal and family supports). While the Blueprint represents our guide for what we invest in, the following **Guiding Principles** represent our north stars to ensure these investments across the full portfolio achieve the best outcomes for young children and their families.

Meet children's unique needs

Children's needs for early childhood services are not one-size-fits-all. Families' access to early childhood services depends on four factors:

- **Adequate supply of services:** Our initiatives help ensure that there is an appropriate mix and stable supply of early childhood services to meet children's needs at the community level.
- **Range of services and settings:** We support an early childhood ecosystem to help address the full spectrum of children's needs through a wide range of providers and programs.
- **Affordability:** Our funded initiatives make it possible for many early childhood services to be offered free or at a reduced cost, while maintaining safe, high-quality environments for children.
- **Information:** We support a variety of educational, navigational, and referral services so families know what is available to them and can make informed choices for their children.

Support parents as their children's first and best teachers

During the first few critical years of growth, parents shape their child's environment in countless ways. Children benefit most when parents are engaged in their learning and development. When parents have the resources, knowledge, skills, and support they need to give their children the best start in life, the impact is clear: stronger families and thriving children. The Kansas Children's Cabinet invests in flexible and responsive services to help reduce costs and position families at the heart of our work. Our funded initiatives are wide-ranging to support parents as their child's first and best teacher, to help ensure every child thrives.





Encourage public-private partnerships

Communities increasingly recognize that public funding alone is insufficient to meet the needs of families, and that private and blended investments can create more sustainable financing for early childhood initiatives. Bringing cross-sector leaders together to improve children's lives has always been central to the mission of the Kansas Children's Cabinet, which has long comprised a mix of public servants, elected officials, and private sector leaders. It is also a core principle of our strategic work, including partnering and grantmaking.

In recent years, Kansas Children's Cabinet initiatives have demonstrated that public-private partnerships are especially effective at unlocking community investments in child care, changing the way communities view child care needs, and expanding awareness of child care resources that exist in the community.

- Public-private partnerships can **unlock community investments** in child care through contributions of buildings, land, and funding for capital investments. These partnerships lay the groundwork for sustainable systems that will serve families in their communities for years to come.
- Communities are turning to public-private partnerships and coalitions to **better understand and address the complex nature of their child care needs**. These partnerships have facilitated locally driven needs assessments and strategic plans, and have helped shift the narrative around child care from being solely an individual family concern to a shared workforce and economic development issue.
- Strategic partnerships between public agencies, private organizations, educational institutions, and local nonprofits help communities be more **efficient and effective in responding to local child care needs** by sharing resources.

Prioritize efficiency and effectiveness

An efficient and effective early childhood system depends on coordinated service delivery, continuous information sharing, and rigorous analysis. Ensuring effectiveness is core to our mission and responsibility to evaluate use of the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF) as articulated in statute. We have long been recognized as a state leader in requiring all funded programs to collect and report data on the reach and impact of their services, promoting transparency through the annual CIF accountability process, and establishing the Common Measures Initiative to support evaluation of the Early Childhood Block Grant.

Prioritizing Data and Accountability

The Kansas Children's Cabinet has been a state leader in innovative use of data and decision making for nearly 20 years. When the annual **Accountability Process** of the Children's Initiatives Fund started in 2006, it was the first state-level multi-program evaluation. Similar systemic and transparent uses of data to manage state programs are rare to this day. In 2015, the Kansas Children's Cabinet began the **Common Measures Initiative**, a transparent shared measurement system to ensure the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) investments are aligned with the goals of the Blueprint and having optimal impact on children and families. The Kansas Children's Cabinet was also an early adopter of the **DAISEY software system** to collect data using shared measurement tools. Additional evaluation methodologies include surveys, site visits, and regular qualitative and quantitative data collection, as well as ongoing technical assistance and fiscal oversight to ensure grantee fidelity to program goals and objectives. We adopt this rigorous evaluation approach for all funded programs no matter the funding source, including the collection of appropriate validated measures in accordance with K.S.A. 38-2103.

While continuously improving these ongoing evaluations, the Kansas Children's Cabinet also supports the development of cutting-edge approaches to collect and analyze data that helps us understand and communicate the needs of Kansas families, the impact of services, and return on investments.

- The **Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust** provides the structure and governance for state agencies to share data and support cross-systems data analysis for current authorized projects:
 - Linking ECBG program data with data from the Department for Children and Families (DCF) to identify the most effective systems approach for preventing child maltreatment. This project also studies the long-term impact of prevention-focused services.
 - The **Kansas Distinct Count Dashboard** combines multiple sources of early childhood data (e.g., child care services, home visiting, Part C) into a publicly available and easy to use tool to showcase a statewide map of how many children are served across early childhood multiple programs.
 - A pilot project initiated in 2024 links records between early childhood and K-12 datasets to create a unique identifier for each child. This linkage is intended to enhance understanding of how participation in early childhood programs and services impacts a child's educational trajectory and well-being.
- The **Well-Being Pathway** is an online resource highlighting community bright spots and offering data-driven guidance on how to strengthen community and family well-being.
- An analysis of **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library** integrated program data with ECBG data to identify the benefit of program participation on early literacy skills.
- The **Our Tomorrows** project collects stories from Kansas families and caregivers to understand everyday experiences of the early childhood system.



Portfolio

- Children's Initiatives Fund
- CIF Programs
- Federal Funding



Introduction to the Children's Initiatives Fund

Kansas was a pioneer in establishing a comprehensive system to support children's needs. We were the first state in the nation to establish a Children's Trust Fund in 1980, and the first state in the nation to devote our state share of the Master Tobacco Settlement funds towards meeting the needs of children and families in 1999. This latter statutory effort (K.S.A. 38-1901 and 38-2101 through 38-2105) both created the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund and established the funding sources the Kansas Children's Cabinet draws on to carry out its work—the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY Fund) and the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF).

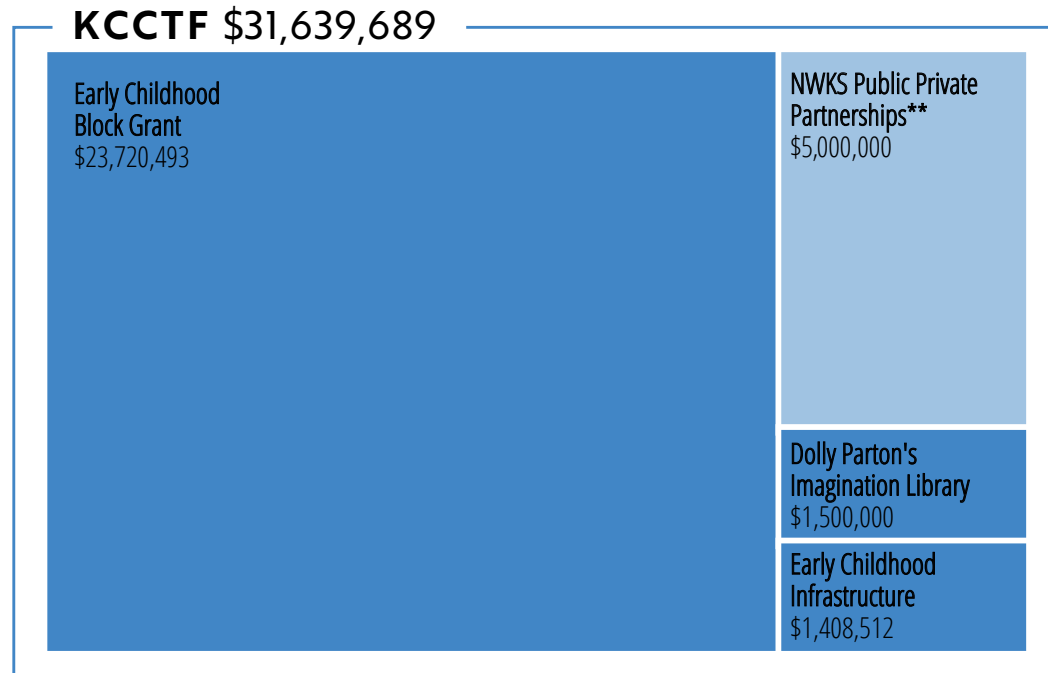
Each year, the Kansas Legislature approves a transfer from the KEY Fund to the CIF for use in programs to support children and families. As directed by statute, the Kansas Children's Cabinet serves as the administrator of this annual CIF budget. The Kansas Children's Cabinet directly manages and administers a portion of this funding for its signature programs and initiatives and transfers the remaining funds to other state agencies for use in early childhood-related programs managed by those agencies.

Since the outset, strict accountability has been part of the plan for CIF. An annual evaluation and accountability process offers a complete look at how programs serve children and families across the state.

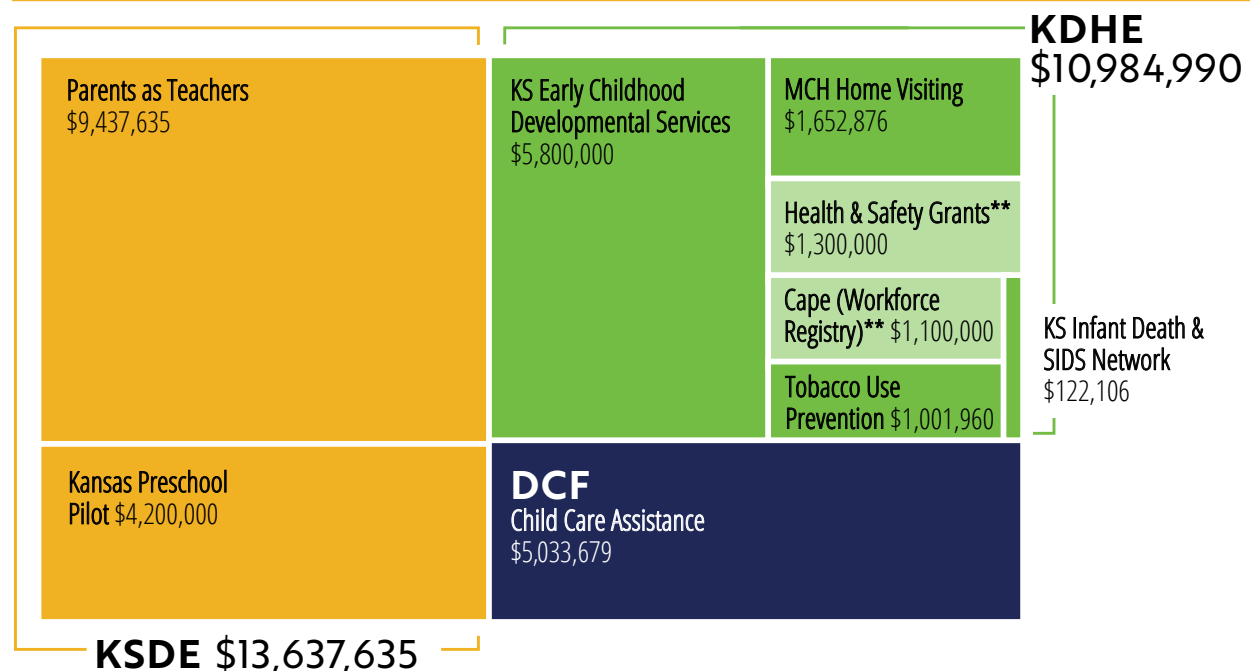
In the coming pages, we will detail the 2025 CIF Funding allocation, Accountability Process, and key takeaways from CIF programs over the last year. We will then provide descriptions and impact highlights from all programs funded by the CIF, starting with those programs directly administered by the Kansas Children's Cabinet.

Total FY2025 CIF Funding | \$61,670,993*

In FY2025, the CIF funded \$61,670,993 to 15 programs and initiatives administered by the Kansas Children's Cabinet, Kansas Department for Children and Families, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and Kansas State Department of Education. Funded programs encompass a range of service types to meet the complex needs of children and families.



Total FY2025 Transfers to Other State Agencies | \$29,656,304



*Including \$375,000 allotted to the Kansas Children's Cabinet Accountability Fund

**One-time funding in FY2025

CIF Accountability Process

All programs receiving funding from the Children's Initiatives Fund participate in the annual **Accountability Process**. This process, which began in 2006, is responsive to K.S.A. 38-2103 requiring that the Kansas Children's Cabinet "review, assess, and evaluate all uses of the monies in the Children's Initiatives Fund" as part of annual allocations. The CIF Accountability Process has long been recognized as distinctive in state-level program evaluation and as a model of transparency for how public funding is used.

We work with researchers at the **University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research (KU-CPPR)** to interview grantees, complete site visits, compile data, and analyze service delivery and outcomes for each program. Researchers provide ongoing technical assistance in interpreting and using results for program improvement.

Findings from this process are used to inform funding recommendations to the governor and the legislature. The process has also served as an opportunity to provide program staff with technical assistance on data and evaluation. Over the years, programs have improved their data collection and reporting processes as a result of participating in the Accountability Process. We use the accountability process to provide feedback that helps our grantees improve the quality of services and outcomes.

Data Sources

Due to the varied nature of service delivery, population served, and program implementation, researchers assess each program independently using three data sources:

- **Program reports** include evaluation reports submitted to federal funding agencies, program annual reports, and research reports that were used internally for programmatic decision making and were collected during the previous reporting year. This information both informs the grantee interviews and guides the analysis of *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan alignment.
- **Online survey responses** provide key information relevant to funding, partnerships, and population served.
- **Program interviews** provide integral information to address each research question, offer additional context for findings, and allow the grantees to highlight success from the past year along with areas needing further support.

CIF Key Takeaways

- Programs funded by CIF provide **critical services** that support the healthy development of Kansas children and families *at reduced or no cost to families*.
- **Economic uncertainty** at the program and family level emerged as a key takeaway, but programs report resiliency as they pursue innovative ways to continue providing services.
- CIF-funded programs continue to experience **difficulties related to recruiting and retaining the workforce**, which limits their reach.
- The need for additional **mental and behavioral health** resources for children, families, and staff continues to be a common request.

71% of families receiving

Child Care Assistance saw an earnings increase or remained stable in their next review

96% of preschoolers supported by the Kansas Preschool Pilot

grant showed improvements in mathematics from the beginning of the program year to the end

Safe Sleep Community Baby Shower participants

showed significant increases in committing to both safe sleep and tobacco cessation

87% of children participating in ECBG programs were on track in early life skills, a 9% increase from the start of the school year

95% of families participating in Part C report that early intervention services have helped the family help their children develop and learn

95% of children were born to smoke-free mothers







CIF Programs Administered by the Kansas Children's Cabinet

A foundational element of the CIF and the Kansas Children's Cabinet portfolio are the programs and initiatives that Kansas Children's Cabinet staff directly administer and manage. These include two signature programs—the Early Childhood Block Grant or ECBG, and the statewide expansion of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library—as well as one-time initiatives where CIF resources and Kansas Children's Cabinet staff oversight are utilized.

The Kansas Children's Cabinet approaches management of these programs with the same accountability rigor as the full CIF portfolio. However, because it manages the initiatives directly, staff are able to implement an additional layer of oversight, technical grantee support, and program impact evaluation. As a result, these program partners—such as those funded by ECBG—are often setting the standards for quality in their communities for early childhood services.

Community partners implementing Kansas Children's Cabinet-administered programs represent all corners of the state and are leading the way on innovation to both identify needs and generate solutions to ensure **every child thrives**. As with all CIF-funded programs, the programs and initiatives administered by the Kansas Children's Cabinet are included in the CIF Accountability Process and align with the Blueprint, our Guiding Principles, and the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan.

The following pages provide details about each of these Kansas Children's Cabinet-administered programs, as well as highlights from their program-level evaluation efforts and the larger CIF Accountability Process.

Early Childhood Block Grant

\$22,800,000 8,282 Children 7,154 Families

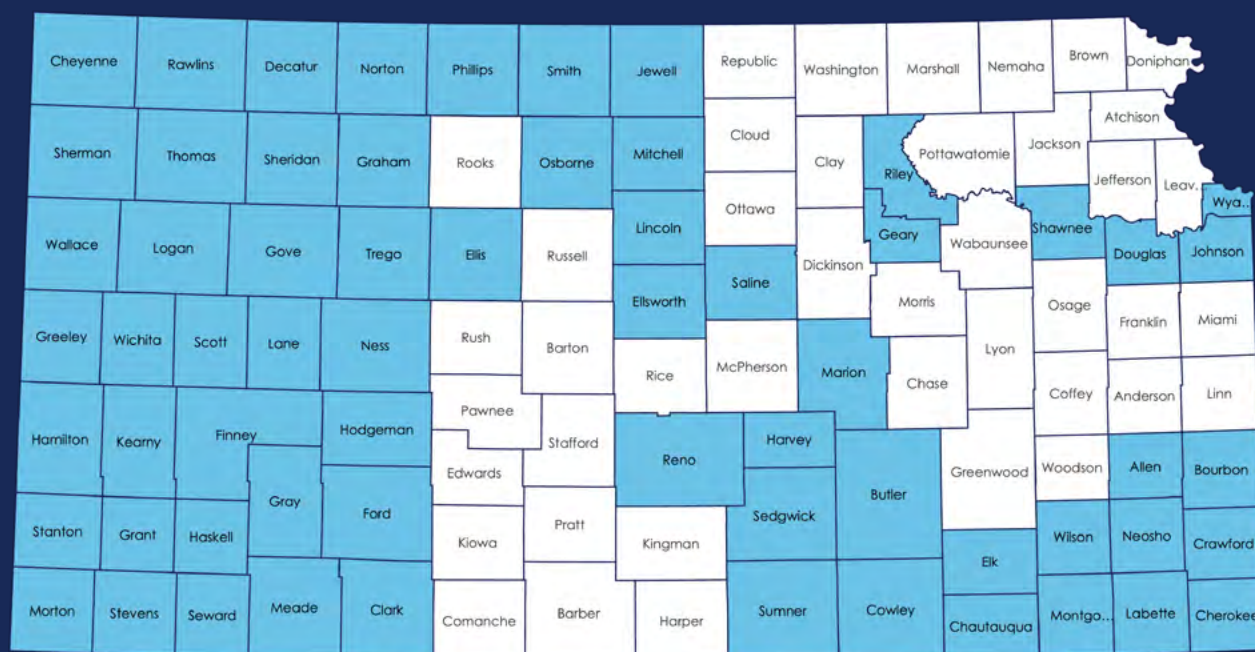
Children are most likely to thrive in school and life when they have access to high-quality interactions, environments, and supports in their first five years. The Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) funded programs vary based on local needs and priorities. Grantees provide a range of services that facilitate early life skills, positive parenting, and quality care and education. The Kansas Children's Cabinet distributes grants to local programs through a statewide, competitive request for proposals process.

Guiding Principles

- Meeting children's unique needs
- Supporting parents
- Encouraging public-private partnerships
- Prioritizing efficiency and effectiveness

A range of ECBG services, such as child care, home visiting, Part C early intervention, behavioral health, and developmental screening, facilitate children's access to high-quality learning opportunities and promote early identification and intervention to best meet children's unique needs. ECBG services include caregiver supports with varied levels of intensity, like home visiting, case management, and parent education, which reduce parenting stress, build parenting skills, and promote better child outcomes. Local ECBG-funded programs tailor service offerings to best respond to identified community needs, primarily reaching children and families in underserved rural and frontier counties. Populations served in FY2025 included 8,282 children, 7,154 parents and caregivers, and 2,561 professionals. To ensure effectiveness, grantees participate in a rigorous annual evaluation known as the Common Measures Initiative conducted by the Center for Applied Research and Evaluation at Wichita State University.

 Counties with ECBG services



ECBG Evaluation

The Kansas Children's Cabinet is required by state statute to direct investments toward programs and services that are data-driven and outcomes-based. The **Center for Applied Research and Evaluation at Wichita State University** conducts an annual evaluation of ECBG programs through collection and analysis of common measures.

The **Common Measures Initiative** is a system of shared measurement that fosters continuous quality improvement by monitoring performance, tracking progress toward goals, and learning what is and is not working. The ECBG portfolio comprises a range of services that are unique to grantees and the communities they serve. Common measurement tools allow the Kansas Children's Cabinet to evaluate uniformly to understand program impact across these local differences. Common measurement has additional benefits for grantees, creating goal alignment, facilitating collaborative problem solving, and encouraging ongoing learning in support of quality programming. Grantees enter common measures data into **DAISEY**, a shared measurement system, to demonstrate success of their early childhood programming. DAISEY is a secure, HIPAA/FERPA-compliant, web-based reporting system developed by the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research licensed to the Kansas Children's Cabinet to support the collection and reporting of child and family outcomes.

Results from the ECBG evaluation inform the Accountability Process and the Kansas Children's Cabinet's recommendations to the governor and legislature. Evaluators also conduct site visits with ECBG grantees to provide ongoing assistance with interpreting and using results for program improvement. The measurement tools used include:

- Ages & Stages Questionnaires® (ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE-2)
- Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
- Devereux Early Childhood Assessments (DECA)
- Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs) for birth to age 3
- Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS)
- myIndividual Growth and Development Indicators (myIGDIs)
- Parental Stress Index, 4th Edition Short Form (PSI SF)

Evaluation findings

88% of parents enrolled in services engaged in positive parenting, which is the **highest rate in 10 years**

81% of classrooms were high-quality, which is the **highest rate in 10 years**

70% of 3-year-olds on track in early literacy in spring compared to 48% in the fall

78% of 3- and 4-year-olds on track in early numeracy in spring compared to 63% in the fall



ECBG Programs

Child Advocacy and Parenting Services, Inc. (CAPS)	\$1,034,660	580 Children	478 Families
<i>Child Care, Pre-K, Classroom Supports, Parent Education, and Home Visiting services in North Central Kansas</i>	96% of the classrooms served were high quality		
Child Start	\$187,388	94 Children	78 Families
<i>Classroom Supports in South Central Kansas</i>	75% of the infant classrooms were high quality		
Early Childhood Collective of Douglas County	\$1,018,285	328 Children	282 Families
<i>Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Children, Child Care, Classroom Supports, Parent Education, Tuition Assistance, and Case Management services in Northeast Kansas</i>	71% of parents were observed to engage in positive parenting after participation in case management services		
Families and Communities Together, Inc.	\$198,385	188 Children	180 Families
<i>Classroom Supports, Parent Education, Home Visiting, and Tuition Assistance in South Central Kansas</i>	100% of their Pre-K classrooms were high quality		
Family Resource Center, Inc.	\$1,861,888	945 Children	836 Families
<i>Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Children, Pre-K, Classroom Supports, Home Visiting, and Case Management services in Southeast Kansas</i>	Strong improvement was observed in all areas of classroom quality		
Four County Mental Health Center, Inc.	\$472,209	125 Children	106 Families
<i>Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Children, Case Management, Classroom Supports, and Parent Education services in Southeast & South Central Kansas</i>	Caregivers reported less parenting stress after participating in the program		
Futures First (formerly The Family Conservancy)	\$1,790,383	773 Children	631 Families
<i>Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Children, Tuition Assistance, and Classroom Supports in Northeast Kansas</i>	92% of children were assessed to be proficient in early life skills		

Growing Futures Early Education Center	\$510,642	207 Children	175 Families
<i>Pre-K, Classroom Supports, and Home Visiting in Northeast Kansas</i>	<i>Outcomes in early literacy indicated exceptionally strong growth in all areas, with a 60% increase in children on track in language comprehension</i>		
Junction City Family YMCA	\$463,085	187 Children	126 Families
<i>Parent Education and Home Visiting in North Central Kansas</i>	<i>Families in the parent education program had the largest change in positive parenting skills in ECBG with a 48% increase in parents who displayed positive parenting by the end of services</i>		
Kansas Children's Service League	\$395,484	96 Children	93 Families
<i>Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Children, and Pre-K in South Central Kansas</i>	<i>Children in the mental health program had one of the largest increases (18%) in meeting early life skill benchmarks</i>		
LiveWell Northwest Kansas	\$496,634	271 Children	215 Families
<i>Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Children, Child Care, Classroom Supports, Parent Education, and Home Visiting in Northwest and North Central Kansas</i>	<i>75% of Pre-K children were on track in phonological awareness, which was well above the ECBG statewide average</i>		
Phillipsburg Child Care Center (PCCC)	\$100,911	42 Children	30 Families
<i>Child Care, Pre-K, and Classroom Supports in Northwest Kansas</i>	<i>73% of Pre-K children were on track in numeracy by spring</i>		
Riley County Health Department	\$911,757	271 Children	263 Families
<i>Classroom Supports, Tuition Assistance, and Parent Education in Northeast Kansas</i>	<i>Assessments showed strong growth (21% increase) in Pre-K students on track in phonological awareness, and three classrooms had significantly stronger gains than ECBG classrooms overall</i>		
Russell Child Development Center (RCDC)	\$2,569,565	1,078 Children	842 Families
<i>Child Care, Classroom Supports, Parent Education, and Home Visiting in Southwest Kansas</i>	<i>Parents improved in all areas of positive parenting, ending with 97% of caregivers displaying positive parenting</i>		

TOP Early Learning Centers	\$2,962,684	405 Children	363 Families
<i>Child Care, Pre-K, Classroom Supports, Parent Education, Case Management, and Tuition Assistance in South Central Kansas</i>	<i>Classroom quality improved throughout the year, and 94% of classrooms were observed to be high quality by spring</i>		
Tree House Early Education Foundation	\$200,000	46 Children	41 Families
<i>Child Care, Pre-K, Developmental Screening and Referrals, and Classroom Supports in Southeast Kansas</i>	<i>100% of classrooms were observed to be high quality</i>		
United Way of Kaw Valley	\$2,530,492	1,132 Children	998 Families
<i>Special Needs Services for Children, Child Care, Pre-K, Classroom Supports, Parent Education, and Home Visiting in Northeast Kansas</i>	<i>Participation in parent programs resulted in decreased parental stress</i>		
United Way of Reno County	\$922,906	425 Children	395 Families
<i>Special Needs Services for Children, Classroom Supports, Pre-K, Home Visiting, Tuition Assistance, and Case Management in South Central Kansas</i>	<i>78% of 3- and 4-year-old children were on track in numeracy by spring</i>		
United Way of the Plains	\$779,884	305 Children	292 Families
<i>Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Children, Tuition Assistance, Developmental Screening and Referrals, Classroom Supports, Parent Education, and Home Visiting in South Central Kansas</i>	<i>Participation in parent programs resulted in decreased parental stress</i>		
USD 273 Beloit - Mitchell County Partnership for Children (MCPC)	\$414,500	266 Children	237 Families
<i>Child Care, Classroom Supports, Tuition Assistance, and Parent Education in North Central Kansas</i>	<i>Pre-K children grew in language comprehension to reach 89% on track by spring</i>		
USD 293 Quinter	\$151,730	37 Children	36 Families
<i>Pre-K, and Classroom Supports in Northwest Kansas</i>	<i>3-year-old Pre-K students improved in early literacy skills, with 91% on track by spring</i>		

USD 298 Lincoln	\$127,396	40 Children	36 Families
<i>Child Care, Pre-K, and Classroom Supports in North Central Kansas</i>	<i>3- and 4-year-old children had the strongest improvement (59% increase) in the percentage on track in numeracy in ECBG</i>		
USD 445 Coffeyville	\$790,848	161 Children	149 Families
<i>Pre-K and Classroom Supports in Southeast Kansas</i>	<i>4-year-old early literacy assessment showed strong improvement in both language comprehension (39% increase) and phonological awareness (17% increase)</i>		
USD 450 Shawnee Heights	\$360,504	96 Children	95 Families
<i>Pre-K and Classroom Supports in Northeast Kansas</i>	<i>4-year-old children improved in early numeracy, and 83% were on track by spring</i>		
USD 489 Hays - Connections Preschool	\$380,733	61 Children	60 Families
<i>Pre-K and Classroom Supports in Northwest Kansas</i>	<i>4-year-old children improved in early numeracy, and 89% were on track by spring</i>		
USD 500 Kansas City - Project SPARK	\$1,167,047	123 Children	117 Families
<i>Pre-K in Northeast Kansas</i>	<i>100% of Pre-K classrooms were observed to meet high-quality standards</i>		

Classroom Supports vary by grantee, and can include classroom materials, academic or early life skills consultation, professional development, and incentives or scholarships for teachers/providers.

“Gap funding has been a great help for one of my families in particular. This young lady has struggled with finding employment. She found employment and was able to get her child enrolled in my center, but then she realized that the center hours were from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., which was incompatible with her work schedule. The Family Conservancy stepped in and covered the fees for the before and after school hours, and it has really been a lifesaver for this parent.”

*—Child Care Provider supported by Futures First
(formerly The Family Conservancy)*

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

\$1,500,000

Decades of research demonstrate that children's exploration of, and engagement with, books promotes literacy skill development and positive caregiver-child interactions. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (Imagination Library) mails one free, age-appropriate book every month to all enrolled children (eligible from birth to their 5th birthday). As the state lead for the Imagination Library, the Kansas Children's Cabinet partners with local affiliate programs by providing a 50% financial match and promoting enrollment. Local affiliates provide outreach, enrollment support, and the remaining 50% cost of mailing books to participating children. Participation in the Imagination Library nurtures early literacy that prepares children's future success in school and beyond.

Having minimal eligibility requirements reduces barriers to participation, delivering books to as many Kansas children as possible. Monthly books include guidance for caregivers on how to incorporate reading and literacy skills into daily routines, equipping parents with tools and promoting their self-efficacy. Cost-sharing between the Kansas Children's Cabinet and local affiliates makes program administration feasible while ensuring access to all young children in Kansas, regardless of where they live. The Imagination Library is a relatively low-cost, straightforward intervention that promotes early literacy skill development, working in tandem with other statewide efforts to improve literacy rates.

Guiding Principles

- Meeting children's unique needs
- Supporting parents
- Encouraging public-private partnerships
- Prioritizing efficiency and effectiveness



NWKS Public Private Partnership

\$5,000,000

NWKS Public Private Partnership is an endowment established with the Dane G. Hansen Foundation and is held, invested, and administered by the Greater Northwest Kansas Community Foundation. The goal for the endowment is to help ensure operational sustainability for child care facilities and allow more Kansans to enter the workforce by having access to reliable child care in the 26-county area of Northwest Kansas. This program was supported by the CIF in FY2025 with one-time funding.

Guiding Principles

- Supporting parents
- Encouraging public-private partnerships

2025 Highlights

- \$11 million total committed funds and \$545,863 in investment growth
- \$153,600 in grants awarded to date, including one grant request cycle and 2 emergency grant requests.
- \$163,400 in requests currently under review to be announced by the end of 2025

Early Childhood Infrastructure

\$1,419,196

A line item within the CIF for Early Childhood Infrastructure to support the long-term vision of the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan. Setting aside dedicated funds to support early childhood systems-level resources will help the Kansas Children's Cabinet fulfill its role as a Connector and its statutory responsibilities as the coordinating entity for the early childhood system in Kansas. This fund allows us to support tools, enhancements, and efficiencies as part of the goals of the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan (Goals 1 & 2).

Guiding Principles

- Prioritizing efficiency and effectiveness

2025 Highlights

- Provided funding support for 1-800-CHILDREN, DAISEY, and Cape (Workforce Registry)
- Funded Early Childhood Data Trust Authorized Projects
- Provided one-time expenses for program support
- Funded Kansas Children's Cabinet administration



CIF Programs Administered by Other State Agencies

Approximately half of the FY2025 CIF was transferred to other state agencies for use in early childhood-related programs managed by those agencies. These are programs that align with the Blueprint, our Guiding Principles, the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan, and reflect the collaborative approach we take in ensuring CIF resources are utilized to meet the full range of needs young children and their families have.

The CIF funds child care initiatives administered by the Kansas Department for Children and Families, home visiting and preschool services managed by Kansas State Department of Education, and both child care and maternal health initiatives run by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

While the Kansas Children's Cabinet does not administer these programs directly, we do include these programs in the annual CIF Accountability Process. Staff from these programs partner with our evaluation team at KU-CPPR to provide information about both the reach and impact of the CIF-funded portion of their programs.

The following pages provide details about each of these CIF-funded initiatives administered by partner state agencies as well as highlights from their Accountability Process evaluation.

Child Care Assistance

\$5,033,679

Child Care Assistance supports families who are initially living at or below 85% of the state median income. Child Care Assistance provides families with financial support for child care while parents work, attend school, complete a GED, or fill a temporary emergency need. Child Care Assistance promotes school readiness and financial stability for families by increasing access to high-quality child care environments. The program typically serves families with children under age 13 but some exceptions allow funding for children up to age 18.

Guiding Principles

- Meeting children's unique needs
- Supporting parents

2025 Highlights

- **20,544 children and their families** served
- 70% of families receiving subsidies for a full year saw their household income increase or remain the same
- Families continue to report being able to receive care they would not have access to without assistance

Kansas Early Childhood Developmental Services

\$5,800,000

As part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C, Kansas Early Childhood Developmental Services provides early intervention services for children from birth to age 3 who have a disability or a developmental delay, and their families, by funding local Infant Toddler Services of Kansas Programs. Services are delivered to families in their home environments, and providers work alongside community partners to ensure families have the resources they need to support their child's development. During FY2025, Kansas Early Childhood Developmental Services served **11,499 children birth to age 3 and their families**.

Guiding Principles

- Meeting children's unique needs
- Supporting parents

2025 Highlights

Children with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

- 99.8% demonstrated improved positive life skills or had skills comparable to same-aged peers
- 99.8% demonstrated improved acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, including early language skills or had skills comparable to same-aged peers
- 99.9% demonstrated improved use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs or had skills comparable to same-aged peers

Kansas Preschool Pilot (KPP)

\$4,200,000

KPP funds school districts and community partners to support high quality preschool programming for children ages 3 to 5. In FY2025, KPP served **4,157 children** and **744 professionals**. The program implements evidence-based curricula, instruction, and assessment practices shown to prevent later academic and behavioral challenges. Four key components guide the work of KPP: community collaboration, family engagement, high-quality early learning experiences, and successful children. Each of these elements are known to improve quality in early learning and promote success in school.

2025 Highlights

From the beginning of the program year to the end

- 95% of preschoolers showed improvements in literacy
- 96% of preschoolers showed improvements in mathematics
- 96% of preschoolers showed improvement in life skills development

Guiding Principles

- Meeting children's unique needs
- Supporting parents

KIDS Network

\$122,106

The Kansas Infant Death and SIDS (KIDS) Network serves individuals touched by the tragedy of infant loss, miscarriage, stillbirth or SIDS and connects those working to reduce the risk of infant deaths. The program provides grief support services to parents, family and friends, and offers community education, professional training, and associated research. Events, such as the KIDS Network Safe Sleep Instructor Certification, Safe Sleep Community Baby Showers, and Crib Clinics, promote a statewide infrastructure to educate current and expectant parents, relatives, community members, and health and child care providers on safe sleep practices to eradicate preventable infant deaths.

2025 Highlights

- 497 Safe Sleep events were held across 88 Kansas counties
- 8 hospitals maintained Safe Sleep Hospital Certification through the KIDS certification process
- 7 Safe Sleep Clinics (obstetrics, pediatrics, and family medicine) are certified Safe Sleep Star by the KIDS Network
- Served **12,689 children, 15,906 parents and caregivers**, and **7,599 professionals**

Guiding Principles

- Supporting parents
- Encouraging public-private partnerships

Maternal Child Health (MCH) Universal Home Visiting

\$1,660,924

MCH Universal Home Visiting is a strengths-based model connecting all Kansas parents/caregivers who are pregnant, postpartum, or raising an infant, with the resources they desire to create a safe, stable, and nurturing home environment. Visits are tailored to the family, with the frequency and duration of visits being flexible, based on input from the family and availability of other programs in the community. Home visitors act as a bridge for families as their needs change from the prenatal period, to labor and delivery, to postpartum care and education, to early childhood health and education. MCH Home Visitors connected **4,142 parents** and caregivers and **2,506 children** to the community-based resources, services, and supports they desired.

2025 Highlights

- **8,624 visits** were conducted
- 66% of women initiated prenatal care in the first trimester
- 62% of mothers reported breastfeeding during the child's first year

Guiding Principles

- Meeting children's unique needs
- Supporting parents
- Prioritizing efficiency and effectiveness

Parents as Teachers (PAT)

\$9,437,635

PAT is an evidence-based parent education and family engagement home visiting model designed to give parents and caregivers the tools they need to support their child's development. In coordination with the Kansas State Department of Education and local school districts, certified parent educators work with families to foster healthy development and promote positive parent-child interactions. Developmental and health screenings are used to identify potential delays or areas of concern, implement interventions, and refer families to additional community resources when needed.

2025 Highlights

- **53,243 personal visits** were conducted in support of **7,675 children** and **5,612 parents and caregivers**
- 94% of enrolled families were linked to at least one community resource during the program year
- 89% program retention rate (excluding families who moved out of the service area)

Guiding Principles

- Meeting children's unique needs
- Supporting parents
- Prioritizing efficiency and effectiveness

Tobacco Use Prevention

\$1,001,960

Tobacco Use Prevention Program uses evidence-based strategies and community partnerships to educate the public and increase awareness about the negative health effects of tobacco use. The program aims to prevent children from becoming tobacco users, reduce tobacco-related deaths and exposure to second-hand smoke or e-cigarette aerosol, and promote policy change. To support the success of current tobacco users who are trying to quit, the program operates the Kansas Tobacco Quitline (1-800-QUIT-NOW).

Guiding Principles

- Prioritizing efficiency and effectiveness

2025 Highlights

- 95% of children born to smoke-free mothers
- 37% of the adult smoking population in Kansas tried to quit in the past year
- 27% increase in Kansas youth enrolled in My Life, My Quit
- Served **692,174 children** and **1,827 professionals**



Cape

\$1,100,000

Cape is a statewide registry for the child care workforce, aimed at connecting professionals with employers, recording professional development, and providing resources and support. Cape is designed to empower individuals, facilities, and training organizations in the child care field. Bringing together training resources, planning tools, and professional recognition at the systems level aims to make navigating careers in early childhood and advancing the profession easier and more impactful. This program was supported by the CIF in FY2025 with one-time funding.

2025 Highlights

- Soft-launched in January 2025
- Registered users in all 105 counties
- **8,812 profiles** entered into the system
- **5,308 Educators/Direct Care Professionals**
- **14,122 course offerings** ordered

"It feels surreal that something early childhood leaders have dreamt of for many years has become a reality. This is an exciting step forward for the State of Kansas and the Early Childhood Workforce."

—Haley Hynek, Cape Director at KCCTO

Guiding Principles

- Encouraging public-private partnerships
- Prioritizing efficiency and effectiveness

Health & Safety Grants

\$1,300,000

The KDHE Health & Safety Grants program aims to assist child care providers in making improvements or upgrades to their facilities to address health and safety-related issues. This includes support for providers whose facilities are impacted by natural disasters or have other emergency facility repair needs that may jeopardize health and safety. These grants play a pivotal role in ensuring child care facilities remain operational and children in care have healthy, safe environments to thrive. This program was supported by the CIF in FY2025 with one-time funding.

2025 Highlights

- 359 applications received, 215 approved
- **175 Home Provider Grantees**
- **40 Center Provider Grantees**
- Approved applications represent 5,578 licensed slots
- Most common requests: Fences, roofs, playground equipment, safe sleep, hot water tanks, HVAC, car seats



Federal Funding

In addition to the CIF, the Kansas Children's Cabinet oversees a portfolio of federally funded initiatives that support young children and their families.

The Community-based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) program, which is administered federally by the Administration of Children and Families, renews funding every year. These funds support a slate of community-based grantees approved by the Kansas Children's Cabinet Board.

Other federal funding sources are time-limited and are often a result of competitive grant applications submitted to federal funding partners. These include initiatives that strengthen the early childhood system or support innovation and pilot programs to expand access for families. The Kansas Children's Cabinet is uniquely positioned to lead on these competitive federal opportunities because of our strong community-level partnerships, grantmaking abilities, and approach to evaluation and accountability. We leverage opportunities that align with the Blueprint and our Guiding Principles, and that enable us to identify needs and advance the goals of the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan.

The following section provides information about the federally funded programs in the Kansas Children's Cabinet portfolio, including descriptions, strategic alignment, and 2025 highlights.

Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention

Crises can be prevented by supporting families when they are experiencing disruption. The Kansas Children's Cabinet is the state lead agency for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention grants. In FFY 2025, CBCAP provided a total of \$1,760,609 to Kansas grantees. CBCAP focuses on strengthening and supporting families to prevent the likelihood of abuse or neglect. Together, CBCAP programs form a system that ensures the well-being, safety, and stability of children and families. Through authentic engagement with communities and those with lived experience, including former foster youth and caregivers, the system strengthens families, addresses social determinants of health, and promotes lifelong well-being in Kansas.

Guiding Principles

- Meeting children's unique needs
- Supporting parents
- Prioritizing efficiency and effectiveness

CBCAP Evaluation

The CBCAP evaluation is designed to identify and measure how programs build protective factors, promote family resilience, and contribute to community well-being. Using a mixed-method approach, the evaluation draws on two primary data sources: (1) the Protective Factors Survey, 2nd Edition Retrospective (PFS-2 Retro), which captures quantitative changes in caregiver well-being and family functioning, and (2) qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews, which provides qualitative insights into the broader community-level impacts of CBCAP programming. Grantees also collect detailed referral data to document when families were connected to external organizations for services and report on the types of concrete supports they provide families.

Evaluation Findings

- CBCAP grantees provided **2,833 concrete supports**, including resources such as clothing closets, hygiene pantries, and household item stock rooms to meet families' immediate needs, promote well-being, and increase household stability to a total of **3,117 children** and **4,902 families**
- CBCAP grantees hosted **602 events and trainings** for parents and children, including community baby showers, literacy and education events, and school supply drives

"It has had a huge impact on me. I acquired new knowledge. I used to feel overwhelmed, worried, and full of fears, but being in the program helped me overcome them. Financially, I didn't know what we were going to do—it was nights of stress and sleeplessness, imagining how we would pay for everything."

—CBCAP participant

Families participating in CBCAP programs experienced:

- **31%** improvement in family functioning and resilience
- **11%** improvement in nurturing and attachment
- **27%** improvement in social supports

CBCAP Programs

Barton County Health Department: Family Crisis Center	\$160,956	92 Children	53 Families
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Strengthen families by providing case management services, education resources on early childhood development, and parent education workshops to strengthen families in Barton County.

The Family Conservancy	\$125,300	204 Children	123 Families
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Individualized support services, on-site parenting education, and child development education for families living in public housing in the Kansas City area.

Family Resource Center	\$163,191	538 Children	336 Families
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Family response advocate services, case management, home visiting services, and child development and parenting skills education to meet individual family needs and preferences in Southeast Kansas.

Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL)	\$400,000	N/A	351 Families
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Statewide services for the prevention of child abuse and neglect through a coordinated network of partnerships designed to raise awareness, provide parent support groups throughout the state, and specialized training to prevent trauma and promote child abuse prevention.

Kansas Holistic Defenders	\$134,913	40 Children	37 Families
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High-quality, multi-disciplinary civil legal services and wraparound supports to help stabilize families in Southeast Kansas.

Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department	\$151,801	47 Children	58 Families
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Care coordination, prenatal education, home visiting services and parent supports for women in Douglas County.

Parent Child Assistance Program (PCAP)	\$184,416	83 Children	61 Families
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In-home weekly visits and coaching, as well as referrals to substance use treatment and case management as appropriate, to strengthen families and promote child well-being in Douglas County.

Pony Express Partnership for Children's (PEPC)	\$200,000	66 Children	24 Families
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Home visiting, case management, early intervention screenings, resource and referral connections, wraparound supports and high-quality child care services in North Central Kansas.

Southeast Kansas Library System	\$54,000	2,016 Children	3,836 Families
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Expansion of the Family Play Spaces in Kansas Libraries initiative to additional regional libraries which promote child/parent engagement, parenting support and knowledge, and developmentally appropriate story times for children.

Wichita Coalition for Child Abuse Prevention & Crisis Nursery	\$186,032	31 Children	23 Families
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Safe, nurturing emergency child care for families in crisis, as well as case management and referrals to community resources in the Wichita area.

Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Renewal Grant (PDG-R)

An efficient, effective early childhood system requires collaboration across agencies and programs. Kansas was awarded a 3-year PDG Renewal Grant for \$7 million per year in September 2024. The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund is the designated state lead for this grant with KU-CPPR providing grant coordination and evaluation. The PDG-R grant supports implementation of key actions of the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan to strengthen and expand several initiatives to support young children, their families, and the professionals who serve them. Activities include:

- System-Level Knowledge, Collaboration, and Communication
- Early Childhood Workforce Initiatives
- Family Resources and Navigation
- State/Local Partnerships and Community Collaboration

2025 Highlights

- **Child Care Zones** launched as a scalable, place-based grant model that empowers local communities to design and test access and quality solutions tailored to regional needs.
- The **Kansas Early Childhood Mental Health Convening** in October brought together professionals from across early childhood, maternal child health, and mental health systems to identify opportunities to collaborate, share resources, and address gaps. Partners like the Kansas Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (KAIMH) are providing trainings for child care professionals to ensure they are equipped to effectively support families and children with specialized care needs.
- The **Substitute Pool Program** created a shared substitute service that providers can draw on to cover staff absences, participate in professional development, or take needed leave. Within its first year, the program supplied thousands of hours of coverage across multiple counties and demonstrated that a centralized substitute infrastructure can operate efficiently.
- Since being launched in January, users of **Cape**, the early childhood workforce registry, have logged 27,729 training and event registrations connecting them to key professional development opportunities across the state.
- **Thrive Allen's Health Insurance Stipend Program** addressed the lack of access to affordable health coverage among child care professionals. Through monthly stipends and navigation assistance, the program enabled 183 child care professionals to purchase or maintain insurance on the health marketplace, directly strengthening workforce well-being and retention.
- The **Future Fellows** program launched a fourth cohort, the first of which to focus solely on the early childhood sector. In July, a kick-off event featured a day-and-a-half of learning and brainstorming around how to embed futures thinking and foresight skills into system-building work to benefit the Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem.

Guiding Principles

- Meeting children's unique needs
- Supporting parents
- Encouraging public-private partnerships
- Prioritizing efficiency and effectiveness

KAN-LINK

Child abuse prevention and early childhood development are intrinsically linked because the early years of a child's life are critical for establishing healthy emotional and social foundations. Child welfare and the early childhood system must work together to improve cross sector coordination and collaboration to implement effective prevention strategies during this formative period, significantly reducing the risk of abuse and promoting optimal development. With funding from a Administration for Children and Families Children's Bureau 3-year Child Welfare Discretionary Grant, in the amount of \$274,999 per year, the Kansas Children's Cabinet, KU-CPPR, and DCF are partnering to implement KAN-LINK. KAN-LINK is a prevention framework that works on two levels: 1) identifying and addressing state level barriers so more families can connect to needed supports, and 2) hosting innovation labs with Family Resource Centers (FRC) for community members leaders and lived experts to generate solutions together.

Guiding Principles

- Supporting parents
- Prioritizing efficiency and effectiveness

2025 Highlights

- Successful implementation of policy change adding family support resource links to the PPS Reporter Notification Letter and a leave-behind resource flyer for families who meet with DCF investigators
- Turner Early Childhood FRC (Turner FRC) began implementing their new pilot workflow with USD 202 to identify and connect younger siblings of incoming Kindergartners with ECE supports
- Provided technical support to five FRC innovation pilots



Child Care Capacity Accelerator

Affordable, high-quality child care supports a strong workforce, effective education, and healthy development for children and families in Kansas. Unfortunately, many Kansas families lack access to the affordable child care they need. Over the last three years, the Kansas Children's Cabinet has worked to help Kansas communities address this gap through the [Child Care Capacity Accelerator Grant](#) (Accelerator) program.

The Accelerator's goal has been to catalyze partnerships among local early childhood providers, employers, economic development leaders, and other partners to accelerate the capacity of communities to meet their unique child care needs. The program launched in 2023 with one-time financial support from four sources: the Child Care Development Fund American Rescue Plan Discretionary Fund (CCDF ARPA), the American Rescue Plan (ARPA) State Fiscal Recovery Fund, the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Planning Grant, and the Patterson Family Foundation. In 2025, these sources contributed **\$54.5 million to 63 grantees**, while local communities generated an additional \$58 million to invest in Accelerator projects. This broad support from both public and private partners demonstrates the coordinated commitment and innovative approaches Kansas communities are adopting to find solutions for their child care capacity challenges.

At the close of 2025, nearly all Accelerator construction or renovation projects are complete, with the remaining scheduled to open in 2026. These projects are transforming child care capacity across Kansas. Read the [full Accelerator impact report](#) on the Kansas Children's Cabinet website.

2025 Highlights

- Accelerator grantees have created **5,101 new licensed child care slots**
- **Nearly 30% of these new slots (1,496) are for infants** (children under 18 months). Four counties (Clark, Decatur, Elk, and Rawlins) that previously had zero capacity for infant care now have infant slots available
- Accelerator-supported child care programs have hired **802 new staff** to ensure quality care for children in their communities

Guiding Principles

- Supporting parents
- Encouraging public-private partnerships
- Prioritizing efficiency and effectiveness

"Of all the projects I've ever worked on, this project across the board has had more community support and more engagement than any project I've ever participated in."

—Michelle Margeson,
Emporia Area Chamber of Commerce

Capital Projects Fund Grants

The Kansas Children's Cabinet has long been a champion for cross-sector partnerships to meet the needs of families with young children. The [Capital Projects Funds](#) (CPF) initiative, launched in 2024, represents a prime example of this public-private partnership approach. With funding from the U.S. Treasury under the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund program of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the Kansas Children's Cabinet awarded **\$38 million to ten grantees** to support the construction of multi-purpose community facilities equipped with broadband that co-locate services enabling work, education, and health monitoring, as well as add child care slots. In each of the ten grantee communities, program partners from these different sectors are coming together to construct facilities that meet a range of needs for children, families, and their communities.

Progress has been swift. As of Fall of 2025, half have completed construction (four have held ribbon-cutting events) and the rest have broken ground. All projects will open doors by late 2026, creating multi-purpose spaces that offer multi-generational opportunities for Kansas children and families to thrive. Highlights from two projects are below, and you can read the [full progress report of the CPF initiative](#) on the Kansas Children's Cabinet website.

2025 Highlights

- In Hays, the Bob and Pat Schmidt Community Center is a new multi-generational facility next to HaysMed that houses the Hays Senior Center, a child care facility, and a large community space. Their BEACON program (which offers evening child care, internet access and study space for parents pursuing online classes) collaborates with local universities and schools for tutoring and career-focused coursework. Economic development partners are using the community space for job fairs and other types of eco-devo opportunities.
- The Flint Hills Community Accelerator in Manhattan features a business incubator coupled with telemedicine, primary care services, child care, and resources for job seekers and adult learners. Manhattan Area Technical College offers evening classes on site to support adult learners, including early childhood education degree coursework and ESL courses. The Greater Manhattan Community Foundation supports licensed child care providers with business training and mentoring.
- Led by St. Benedict's Abbey, First Steps with Abbey is transforming a former Kansas juvenile correctional facility into a welcoming space for the health, education, and care needs of families in Atchison County. Health services will include on-site medical care, telehealth, and maternal support, while educational efforts focus on workforce readiness, digital literacy, and child care internships. Employment support is provided through job placement assistance, a professional clothing closet, and practical skills training, including a unique educational program on farm operations delivered by community monks.

Guiding Principles

- Supporting parents
- Encouraging public-private partnerships
- Prioritizing efficiency and effectiveness



"We have partnered with The Local Church in Overland Park and Indiana Wesleyan University to provide access to online college degrees. There are currently five students enrolled in the program. Three are working on an Associate's in Early Childhood Education, One is working on a Bachelor's in Education and one is working on a Master's in Business Administration. We are seeing synergy between our various programs. Parents accessing additional mental health services, teachers pursuing additional educational opportunities as well as individuals in pursuit of various opportunities for training in regards to work force development, etc. We anticipate that this will only grow over time.

*—KidZone Learning Center in Overland Park,
CPF Grantee*



Looking Ahead

- Budget Recommendations
- Office of Early Childhood
- Conclusion



Budget Recommendations

In April 2025, the National Association of Attorneys General reported that Kansas had received \$47,364,054.02 from the annual tobacco settlement payout. This is the lowest Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) annuity since 2017, down from \$55,986,294 in 2023 and a high of \$61,332,864 in 2022. The historical average hovers around \$53 million over the 25-year program duration.

The MSA formula is calculated on national sales of cigarettes. Initiatives like federal and state adoption of the Tobacco 21 Initiative and the rise in use of nicotine products not covered by the MSA (e-cigarettes and other vaping products) have reduced the sale of covered products. The Consensus Revenue Estimating Group (CREG) downgraded expectations for tobacco sales in their last four revenue forecasts. In their April 2025 meeting, CREG adjusted the FY2026 estimate to \$41 million.

The table on the following page reflects the CIF budget organized in the SFY2027 administrative structure with the new Office of Early Childhood. Four programs received one-time funding in FY2025 or FY2026 and are not recommended for additional CIF funding allocations. The Kansas Children's Cabinet recommended flat funding for all other programs in FY2027.

Office of Early Childhood (OEC)

OEC PROGRAM	FY2025	FY2026	FY2027 RECOMMENDATION
Child Care Services*	\$5,033,679	\$5,033,679	\$5,033,679
Workforce Registry**	\$1,100,00	—	—
Healthy Start Home Visitor	\$1,652,876	\$1,660,924	\$1,660,924
Child Care Health and Safety Grants**	\$1,300,00	—	—
Children's Cabinet Accountability Fund	\$375,000	\$375,000	\$375,000
CIF Grants (ECBG)	\$23,720,493	\$23,720,493	\$23,720,493
Parent Education (PAT)	\$9,437,635	\$9,437,635	\$9,437,635
Early Childhood Infrastructure	\$1,408,512	\$1,419,196	—
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
SWKS Child Care Accelerator Grant	—	\$250,000	—
Public Private Partnership**	\$5,000,000	—	—
OEC Total	N/A	N/A	\$41,727,731

Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)

Kansas Early Childhood Developmental Services*	\$5,800,000	\$5,800,000	\$5,800,000
Tobacco Use Prevention	\$1,001,960	\$1,001,960	\$1,001,960
SIDS Network Grant	\$122,106	\$122,106	\$122,106
KDHE Total	N/A	N/A	\$6,924,066

Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE)

Pre-K Pilot Program	\$4,200,000	\$4,200,000	\$4,200,000
KSDE Total	N/A	N/A	\$4,200,000
Total Expenditures	\$61,652,261	\$54,520,993	\$52,851,797

* Denotes programs with a Maintenance of Effort requirement ** Denotes programs removed for FY26 because the legislature adopted Kansas Children's Cabinet board recommendations.

Office of Early Childhood

In April 2025, the Kansas Legislature passed [House Bill 2045](#) with bipartisan support to unify early childhood services in Kansas. The bill creates the [Office of Early Childhood](#) (OEC), with an operational start date of July 1, 2026.

The legislation implements a recommendation made by the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force in their 2023 report highlighting system inefficiencies and navigation challenges for Kansas families. The perspectives of over 500 Kansans helped shape the goals for the OEC, which are to:

- unify core early childhood programs within one agency to better align and elevate the quality of these programs
- streamline navigation and expand access to high-quality early childhood care and education services, helping families easily get the resources and support they need
- increase coordination and cohesion to address access, quality, and workforce challenges
- build a more efficient and effective state-level system that can maximize public investments and quickly pivot resources to respond to evolving family needs
- center the experiences of young children and their families at the heart of this work to support early childhood development and ensure every child thrives

Impact to the Kansas Children's Cabinet

The bill moves the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust to the new office (effective July 1, 2026), along with a variety of programs from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas State Department of Education, and Kansas Department for Children and Families.

It also amends K.S.A. 38-1901 and redefines the Kansas Children's Cabinet Board by amending members' terms of service and adding two new voting members and a non-voting advisory member (the to-be-appointed Director of the Office of Early Childhood). While the timeline for the overall agency move will align with the new OEC operational start date (July 1, 2026), the changes to the Kansas Children's Cabinet Board terms and composition took effect July 1, 2025.



Conclusion

2025 was a year of accomplishments for the Kansas Children's Cabinet, with a portfolio of early childhood investments that Kansans from all corners of our state can and should be proud of. Our grantees are implementing programs that are going above and beyond to meet family needs and preferences, ranging from early intervention and child abuse prevention services to expanding access to high-quality, affordable child care for working families. Our funding partners—including Kansas legislators and federal entities—can trust that their investments in Kansas Children's Cabinet-led initiatives are delivering on their impact and promise because they are backed by rigorous practices related to evaluation, accountability, and transparency. Most importantly, young children in Kansas, who benefit from the initiatives administered by the Kansas Children's Cabinet, are getting what they need to thrive. They are getting access to high-quality early learning environments, and they are growing up in strong families where their individual growth and healthy development are front and center.

2025 also marks a year with change on the horizon. The Kansas Office of Early Childhood (OEC) will begin operations next July, and the Kansas Children's Cabinet and its portfolio of programs will join other state-level early childhood administrators and programs under one roof. We look forward to bringing our brand of exceptional grantmaking, evaluation, and accountability as well as our strong commitment to our youngest Kansans and their families to the OEC.

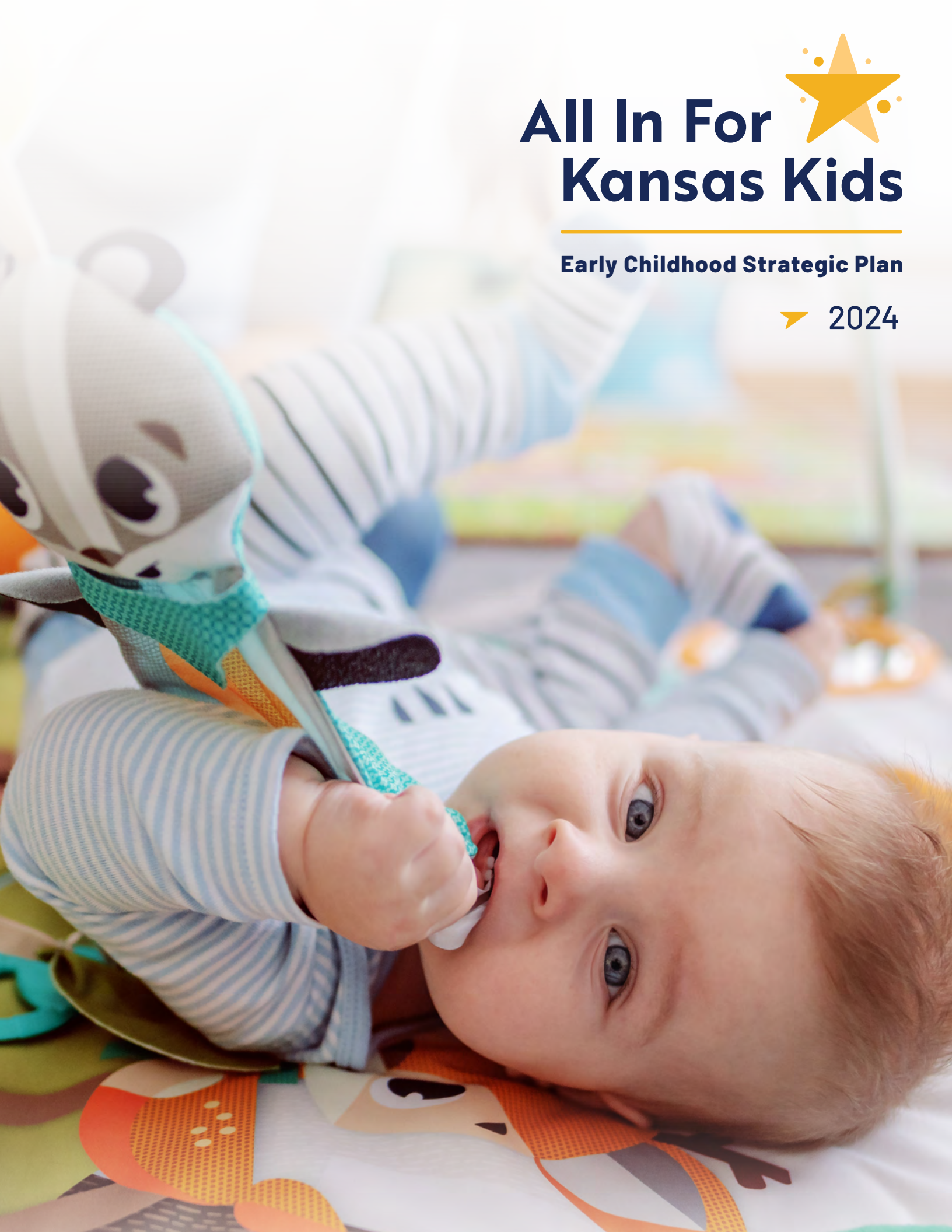
The Kansas Children's Cabinet is poised and ready to lead our early childhood ecosystem into this next phase. Together with Kansas families, our community grantees, our funding partners, and our new peers in the Kansas Office of Early Childhood, we are excited to take the next step in our state's journey to ensure ***every child thrives***.

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kschildrenscabinet.gov



All In For Kansas Kids

Early Childhood Strategic Plan

➤ 2024

The **2024 *All In for Kansas Kids Strategic Plan*** was made possible due to the many Kansans who contributed their experiences, ideas, and feedback to strengthen and improve our system.

The strategic plan was supported by Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five funding from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Special thanks to the leadership, staff, grantees, and partners of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, Kansas State Department of Education, Kansas Department for Children and Families, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research who provided support, guidance, and expertise throughout the process of developing and updating needs assessments and strategic plan tactics for *All In For Kansas Kids*. This information or content and conclusions should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should endorsements be inferred by HHS, ACF, or the U.S. Government.

Suggested citation: All In For Kansas Kids. (2024). Strategic plan for early childhood. Prepared by the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research on behalf of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund.

All In For Kansas Kids

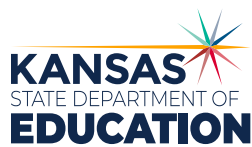


OUR COMMITMENT

A successful strategic plan requires, above all, a commitment to act on goals that help us achieve a shared vision. As state agencies leading the *All In For Kansas Kids* collaboration, we are ultimately responsible for this plan's implementation and monitoring of progress toward positive outcomes for Kansas children and families. We pledge to align our resources and actions in service of this plan. Simply stated, we are dedicated to ensuring that *every child thrives*.

We commit, by our endorsement below, to actively engage agency leaders, equip and empower our employees, and adapt to changing circumstances with foresight and agility. The Blueprint for Early Childhood guides our collaborative work across the ecosystem and helps us remain focused on our children's future. Together, we will navigate challenges, seize opportunities, and make meaningful contributions within our communities.

We invite you, the reader, to do the same. Join us in being *All In For Kansas Kids*.



THE FIRST 5 YEARS

1 MILLION

New neural connections
happen **every second** during
the first few years of life!

Early relationships, experiences, and environment all heavily influence this critical period of brain development. With more **than 90% of a child's brain architecture developed by age five¹**, there is no time to lose. Our efforts to prepare young Kansans for success hinge on the availability, accessibility, and quality of early childhood care and education. This early period of growth significantly impacts cognitive and social development, influencing future academic and lifelong success.

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2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

Background

- Importance of Early Childhood
- What Do Our Youngest Kansans Need?
- 2024 Needs Assessment Key Findings
- Our Children's Future
- Guiding Principles
- Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem
- Framework

➤ When we invest in our youngest children, they are...

20%

more likely

to be well-prepared
for kindergarten²

20%

more likely

to graduate from high school⁴

48%

less likely

to need special
education services³

70%

less likely

to be arrested for a violent crime⁵

Importance of Early Childhood

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

High-quality early childhood programs and services set the stage for positive self-regulation and other protective factors that ultimately reduce the risk of adolescent substance use, becoming a teenage parent, and developing chronic illnesses like hypertension, obesity, stroke, and diabetes later in life.

Kansas children and families directly benefit from a high-quality early childhood ecosystem and so do the many committed professionals in the workforce who make early childhood their career. In fact, all of us benefit from an early childhood ecosystem 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. Strong labor force participation and enhanced buying power boost local economies. In turn, economically vibrant communities contribute to our state's overall prosperity.

Investments in early childhood benefit all Kansans and pay dividends for decades.



What Do Our Youngest Kansans Need?

Kansas is home to 212,462 children birth through 5.⁶ These youngest Kansans need consistent, safe, and high-quality experiences in their early years to ensure they can thrive. This requires supportive home environments, affordable and available early learning programs and services, and an early childhood workforce equipped to meet the unique needs of each child.

Unfortunately, past needs assessments conducted in Kansas reveal that far too many of these children and their families are struggling to meet basic needs and have difficulty accessing and navigating services to support their well-being. Current access is inequitable across the state with many communities lacking child care, home visiting services, early intervention specialists, and specialty health care providers. Even when available, finding and accessing these resources can be overly burdensome and time consuming for families. In many cases, services are out of reach due to a mismatch between each family and child's particular needs and what each family can realistically afford. While not uncommon to have this affordability gap for services at all ages, it is particularly difficult during the early childhood years when working parents are more likely to be just beginning their careers and earning entry-level wages.

ORIGINS

Origins of this strategic plan date back to 2019 with the input of thousands of Kansans for the initial ***All In For Kansas Kids Needs Assessment***⁷ and ***Strategic Plan***⁸. Over the past few years, Kansas activated a new governance structure and communication channels (see p. 42) set up by three consecutive Preschool Development B-5 grants⁹ to strengthen engagement among early childhood partners, professionals, and families. Annual needs assessments—the most recent assessment completed in February 2024¹⁰—sparked ideas and innovations ultimately leading to creation of this ***2024 All In For Kansas Kids Strategic Plan***.

The array of services and supports our youngest Kansans need relies heavily on a robust workforce. Yet early childhood professionals face many obstacles—low wages, a lack of benefits, high turnover, burnout, and more—that impact both the availability and quality of care across our state. Kansas has a severe child care shortage, in part, because child care centers struggle to recruit and retain workers.

2024 Needs Assessment Key Findings

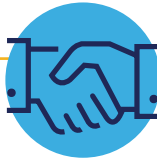
The most pressing needs of children, families, and the early childhood workforce are detailed in the **2024 All In For Kansas Kids Needs Assessment** and helped shape this plan.

Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem

COORDINATED GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

- ✓ **Collaboration across state agencies and organizations has increased, creating greater efficiency and improved access to services.**

- ! **Inherent limitations remain in a coordinated governance model, including fiscal and regulatory differences across agencies, and a lack of a centralized decision-making authority. For families, this means they continue to experience a fragmented system that is often unresponsive to their needs or otherwise inaccessible.**



DATA-BASED DECISION MAKING

- ✓ **Authorized projects were implemented under the Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust to analyze the impact of early childhood investments using cross-agency data. This work is just beginning; partners express a desire to more flexibly share data to take full analytical advantage of existing data to understand outcomes for families within the ecosystem.**

- ! **Navigating multiple layers of data sharing requirements is a persistent challenge.**



PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

- ✓ **Multiple funding streams were blended and braided to support child care needs within the early childhood ecosystem.**



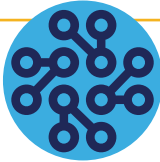
- ! **Responding to differing requirements on various timelines is challenging and requires creative solutions. We need to continue exploring ways to facilitate these partnerships and navigating constraints.**

Early Childhood Workforce and Environments

WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND RETENTION

- ✓ **Integrated initiatives are being launched to recruit, retain, and elevate highly qualified early childhood professionals.**

- ! Many early childhood professionals do not earn livable wages and question how long they can remain in the field.



PROVIDER SUSTAINABILITY

- ✓ **Statewide strategies helped child care administrators keep their doors open despite workforce shortages, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

- ! Sustainability of child care businesses without long-term investment is questionable.



Experiences of Children and Families

BASIC NEEDS ARE FUNDAMENTAL

- ✓ **Kansas implements services and supports to address individual child and family needs, such as improving family functioning, promoting mental health, and finding employment.**

- ! Many families cannot thrive because of barriers such as inadequate health care, inflexible employment opportunities, and low wages.



SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

- ✓ **Our youngest Kansans must have their basic needs met before they can lead future generations and thrive.**

- ! Fragmented early childhood services and supports cannot ensure a desirable and sustainable future for children and families.



Our Children's Future

In a future where every child thrives, Kansas families are able to meet their basic needs, all children have opportunities to succeed, and, without exception, every child is cared for in safe, nurturing environments. These ideal environments are rich with language and interaction, providing many opportunities for young children to play, engage, explore, and learn.

Because we know that what happens in these early years has lifelong effects, we have a responsibility to maximize the benefits of this brief yet formative stage of life.

The infants, toddlers, and young children who live, learn, play, and grow within our state's early care environments today are our leaders of tomorrow and will determine the future prosperity of our state. As we continue to increase the number of high-quality early learning experiences and grow our workforce of nurturing, and highly qualified providers, we are helping make Kansas an attractive place to raise a family.

Creating this future for our children is the work of today and the ultimate aim of this **All In For Kansas Kids Strategic Plan**.

The first **All In For Kansas Kids Strategic Plan** (2020) guided us on a journey toward a more unified early childhood ecosystem and anchored us through the disruptions of the past few years. This **2024 All In For Kansas Kids Strategic Plan** again presents goals that will shape the next five years of the early childhood ecosystem and looks even further into the future—our children's future—to chart the course ahead.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles guided development of this plan. To be *All In For Kansas Kids*, join us in taking action that aligns with these ideals:

Child- and family-centered

Seek parent ideas and feedback, reflect family voice in decision making, and ensure the plan improves the well-being of children and families across the lifespan.

Transparent and accountable

Communicate often about the activities and progress of this plan. Practice continuous quality improvement toward long-term outcomes. Expect mutual transparency, accountability, and engagement across the early childhood ecosystem.

Strengths-based

Use language and strategies that foster hope, ensure universal dignity, and describe ideal outcomes that Kansans believe are possible.

Data-driven

Use the findings of needs assessments to make data-informed decisions about early childhood programs and services. Routinely seek input from Kansans and analyze data from multiple sources to ensure aligned policy recommendations, resource allocation, and programming decisions.

What is the Early Childhood Ecosystem?

The Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem is the robust system of programs, services, and infrastructure that support young children and their families to thrive. At the state level, this ecosystem is spread across four state agencies that each bring a range of funding sources, programs, and services to ensure positive early childhood experiences for Kansans.

Kansas has a long history of valuing early childhood and was the first state in the nation to establish a children's trust fund in 1980. In 1999, landmark legislation dedicated Kansas' annual payments from the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement to the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund (Kansas Children's Cabinet).

The Kansas Children's Cabinet is charged with implementing a coordinated and comprehensive early childhood system, facilitating interagency cooperation, and advising the governor and legislature on investments in early childhood programs and services. To help meet this charge, the Kansas Children's Cabinet developed the Blueprint for Early Childhood¹¹ (Blueprint). This visionary document guides state and local decision making in ways that promote healthy development, strong families, and early learning. These three building blocks inform both cross-agency collaboration and the work within communities to ensure that all children and families get the support they need to thrive. In 2015, the Kansas State Board of Education further elevated the importance of early childhood by incorporating Kindergarten Readiness as a key outcome to achieving the Kansans Can vision—Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

Significant federal investments in recent years have amplified this collaboration, resulting in a newly defined governance structure with mechanisms for elevating challenges and coordinating decisions across agencies and programs. New teams were established, including the **All In For Kansas Kids Leadership Team**¹² (formerly the State Directors Team) and the Kansas Early Childhood Recommendations Panel,¹³ and existing teams were re-energized, such as the Child Care Systems Improvement Team¹⁴ and the Workforce Development Advisory Group.¹⁵

Blueprint for Early Childhood

Foundational Building Blocks



Healthy Development

Kansas children and families thrive when they have equitable access to comprehensive health and developmental services.



Strong Families

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



Early Learning

Kansas children are prepared for success in kindergarten and beyond when their families have equitable access to quality care and early learning environments.

Who is in the Early Childhood Ecosystem?

While all Kansans share in the opportunity to ensure our youngest citizens thrive, many of us work in programs and services that interact in the early childhood ecosystem to promote healthy development, early learning, and strong families. Examples of ecosystem components—programs, job roles, funding sources—are shown on the following page.

As in any ecosystem, components of the Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem interact in complex and symbiotic ways to deliver impact. The Blueprint describes how these interactions result in positive early childhood experiences. We have revised the language used to describe the former “mixed-delivery system” as a healthy, sustainable ecosystem rooted in thriving communities.

Thriving communities are critical to ecosystem functioning

When there is community-level buy-in from both public and private leaders to help strengthen families, invest in early learning, and support healthy development, our youngest Kansans and their families benefit. We are fortunate to have examples of thriving communities in all corners of our state. In these places, families experience a connected early childhood system where they can seamlessly navigate the full range of services needed to thrive. The Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem visual below reflects the foundational role of thriving communities to healthy, efficient ecosystem functioning.



The Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem components below represent the scale and diversity of programs, job roles, and funding sources routinely interacting in thriving communities; it is not intended to be an exhaustive list. However, these are all critical investment areas and serve as calls to action. Because ecosystems are interdependent, gaps in service have ripple effects that need to be addressed holistically. The goals and actions of this strategic plan guide us toward solutions that strengthen services across the ecosystem and focus on those that have the greatest impact on the lives of young children and their families.

Child Care



- Family Child Care
- Child Care Centers
- Head Start
- Child Care Assistance
- Out-of-School Programming

Health Care



- Family/Primary Care Doctors
- Pediatricians, OB/GYNs, and Midwives
- Immunizations and Newborn Screening
- Food and Nutrition Resources
- Federally Qualified Health Centers

Pre-K to 12 Education



- Preschool Education
- Early Childhood Special Education (Part B)
- Kindergarten Transitions
- Literacy and Reading Supports
- School Health

Family Supports



- Economic Assistance (TANF, etc.)
- Housing Supports
- Child and Family Well-Being
- Dept. of Corrections Programs for Parents
- Employment Services

Crisis Services



- Care Coordination
- Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention
- Family Preservation Services
- Substance Use Disorder Supports

Home Visiting



- Parent Education
- Universal Home Visiting (MCH)
- Parents as Teachers
- Healthy Families Initiatives
- Early Head Start
- MIECHV and Family First
- 1-800-CHILDREN

Prenatal and Maternal Support



- SIDS Network
- Kansas Perinatal Community Collaboratives
- Doula Services
- WIC Programs
- SUD Support for Pregnant Women

Mental/Behavioral Health



- Maternal Depression Screening
- Child Mental Health Specialists
- Mental Health Providers/Practices
- Local Health Departments
- Behavioral Health Specialists

Early Intervention/ Developmental Disability



- ASQ Screening
- Kansas Early Childhood Developmental Services (Part C)
- Infant/Toddler Specialist Network
- Kansas Inservice Training
- Special Health Care Supports
- Child Occupational and Physical Therapists

Blueprint Building Blocks

The icons remind us that each sector is critical to meeting the vision guided by the Blueprint and detailed in our *All In For Kansas Kids Strategic Plan* vision.



**Healthy
Development**



**Strong
Families**



**Early
Learning**

Framework

This strategic plan is organized to follow the **2024 All In For Kansas Kids Needs Assessment** with goals and actions arranged into three pillars of emphasis: the ecosystem as a whole, the workforce and learning environments, and the experiences of children and families. Goals, actions, and metrics are listed for each pillar after a brief introduction. Goals broadly describe priorities and direction. Actions prioritize and streamline the work ahead while allowing flexibility for ecosystem members to design their own detailed workplans and timelines. Metrics are intended to measure progress toward goals, and while not a one-to-one match for each action, they capture what it means to achieve strategic plan deliverables over time.

Strategic Plan Organizational Framework

Pillars



Ecosystem



**Early Childhood
Workforce &
Environments**



**Experiences of
Children & Families**

Goals, Actions, and Metrics

GOAL 1

Statement of overall
desired outcome

Actions

1.1 Detailed steps to achieve the desired outcome

Progress Tracking Plan

➤ Data points to know we're going in the right direction or where to make improvements.





PILLAR 1

Ecosystem

When we speak of early childhood in Kansas, we are describing an ecosystem focused on young children and their families centered around the Blueprint's three Building Blocks—Strong Families, Early Learning, and Healthy Development. This ecosystem, depicted in the graphic on page 14, includes programs and resources from the state; the systems in which these resources are funded, administered, and evaluated; and the environment of local programming and community services designed to support thriving children and families. The early childhood ecosystem also considers other supports families may need to thrive, such as health care, behavioral health services, and employment supports.

With a focus on family well-being in addition to services that directly support young children, partners across our early childhood ecosystem are collaborating more than ever before. Kansas leaders have been shifting from insulated work within individual state agencies and moving toward more unified decision making, data sharing, and cross-cutting solutions. Goals and actions in this pillar are crafted to guide continued collaboration and to prioritize child and family well-being most efficiently to meet a wide range of needs. This Pillar is also about nurturing the ecosystem by creating new resources, increasing capacity, forming public-private partnerships, and using data to improve outcomes for all Kansas children and families.

➤ **When we invest in high-quality early childhood programs and services, we can expect a...**



13% Return on investment

through better education, health, and social outcomes.



Participants in high-quality early childhood programs demonstrate higher educational and employment outcomes, reduced school suspensions, and greater physical and relationship health compared to peers.¹⁶

➤ **The benefits of high-quality early childhood programs have also been shown to carry on to the next generation.**



Early childhood education strengthens families and can break the cycle of poverty.¹⁷

➤ **Goal 1** Strengthen the continuum of early childhood services through widespread collaboration across state and local partners.

➤ **Goal 2** Connect families to the right service at the right time through comprehensive networks of resources and programs.

➤ **Goal 3** Measure impact across the full continuum of early childhood services over time and use the data to make changes that reduce disparities and improve outcomes for children.

➤ **Goal 4** Promote agreements between public and private sectors to expand early childhood initiatives.

➤ **Goal 5** Support policies and initiatives that increase capacity, enhance quality, improve access to services, and contribute to economic security for families.

➤ **Goal 6** Strengthen existing tools and create new resources to ensure providers offer families seamless transitions in support of their child's interests, healthy social-emotional development, and academic potential.

GOAL 1

Strengthen the continuum of early childhood services through widespread collaboration across state and local partners.

Actions

- 1.1** Formalize decision-making authority for the continuum of early childhood services to support accountability, transparency, and data-informed initiatives for children, families, and the workforce.
- 1.2** Improve consistency of expectations around early childhood services contracted by and funded through state agencies to reduce administrative inefficiencies and align data collection efforts.
- 1.3** Ensure all early childhood funding decisions made by state agencies are mapped to strategic plan goals or actions.
- 1.4** Enhance coordination across home visiting service models.
- 1.5** Identify Strategic Plan Action Leads and develop a transparent, adaptive, and inclusive process for enacting the plan and monitoring progress toward goals.
- 1.6** Ensure early childhood providers and families are included in all local or state emergency response planning efforts to help young children and families navigate and recover from disruptions (e.g. natural disasters, pandemics, cyber-attacks).
- 1.7** Ensure all state agencies and departments understand their impact and connection to the early childhood ecosystem.

Progress Tracking Plan

- Creation of a strategic plan monitoring process with assigned reporting responsibilities.
- The number of state agencies and local partners reporting as part of the monitoring process.

GOAL 2

Connect families to the right service at the right time through comprehensive networks of resources and programs.

Actions

- 2.1** Inventory existing local networks that help families connect to services. Promote successful models and encourage community adoption and implementation of “no wrong door” approaches for families.
- 2.2** Capture and communicate the bright spots and lessons learned around referral and care coordination networks in local communities. Use allforkansaskids.org, governance group communication channels, and community coalition meetings to promote peer-to-peer learning and widespread adoption of proven practices.
- 2.3** Increase family uptake of 1-800-CHILDREN¹⁸ as a trusted information source. Increase provider awareness of the resource directory behind 1-800-CHILDREN to facilitate provider-to-provider referrals.
- 2.4** Develop community- and family-informed benchmarks for seamless navigation of the early childhood ecosystem. Invest in resources that help communities ensure their full range of local services meets these benchmarks.
- 2.5** Increase the number of **community-based referral networks** that include both early childhood and health care providers to support stronger cross-sector relationships and to help identify and address social determinants of health.¹⁹

Community-based Referral Networks

These are the systems within a community that help a family access and navigate between the programs they need. They can be a set of electronic applications like IRIS,²⁰ 1-800-CHILDREN, or a local 211 website. They can also be a more manual process, such as a common referral form or a list of resources with names and phone numbers that a provider uses to help a family find the service they need. Communities may utilize both, with some providers using electronic communication tools with automation built in and others relying on internal knowledge built and tracked over time. Regardless of what system is in place, all help to create a “no wrong door” approach for families and encourage collaboration between services providers. When communities invest in and recruit providers to participate in these networks, families experience better care coordination with warm handoffs, closed loops, and more precise referrals.

Progress Tracking Plan

- The number of families using, and calls to, 1-800-CHILDREN.
- Percent of Kansas counties covered by a referral network.

GOAL 3

Measure impact across the full continuum of early childhood services over time and use the data to make changes that reduce disparities and improve outcomes for children.

Actions

- 3.1** Identify and adopt quality indicators and targets for early childhood services in key outcome areas. Include, among others, metrics on family engagement, healthy development, early childhood literacy, child care licensing, workforce development, maternal/child health, child care quality, home visiting, and family well-being
- 3.2** Integrate cross-sector data using the Kansas Data Trust Authorized Project process²¹ to measure progress toward targets.
- 3.3** Establish and implement a statewide quality indicators communication plan that increases transparency, generates more robust data, and supports greater understanding of priorities and impact. Target communications by audience: families, providers, state leaders, and community decision makers.
- 3.4** Optimize existing data dashboards to reflect adopted quality indicators and targets. Support program leaders with monitoring to identify areas needing improvement.
- 3.5** Establish a routine quality improvement cycle for **Child Care Licensing regulations**.
- 3.6** Identify and promote tools and resources for measuring social determinants of health across the continuum of early childhood services.
- 3.7** Establish a simple, statewide process for routinely gathering family experiences during the early childhood years to understand more about ecosystem navigation, quality, and effectiveness.
- 3.8** Identify ways to measure the impact of natural disasters and environmental disruptions on families with young children and use the data to make changes that mitigate risk and reduce vulnerability.
- 3.9** Grow participation in the P20W State Longitudinal Data System²² by aligning data collection, integrating with the Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust,²³ and promoting it as a rich source of information on the long-term impact of early childhood investments.

Child Care Licensing Regulations

These are regulations focused on ensuring the health and safety of all children in licensed child care settings. Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) administers the Child Care Licensing program in accordance with the Child Care Act (K.S.A. 65-501 et seq.). The original law was passed in 1919. Statutes and regulations that apply to licensed child care facilities are intended to protect the health, safety, and well-being of children receiving care away from their home and parents or guardians. Maintaining contemporary regulations through regular reviews is crucial in supporting efforts to increase the availability of safe and affordable child care. National health and safety standards found in resources such as *Caring for Our Children* serve as a guide for strong policies and practices. KDHE recently completed a comprehensive review of regulations and incorporated significant input and feedback from child care professionals and families. Updated regulations take effect on August 2, 2024.

Kansas Child Care Licensing is primarily funded by the federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). Services and supports are provided at the community level by KDHE or through contracts with local agencies.

Progress Tracking Plan

- Creation of shared quality indicators and performance targets.
- The number of state agencies and partners implementing shared quality indicators.
- Percent of positive family experiences navigating services and programs across the early childhood ecosystem.

GOAL 4

Promote agreements between public and private sectors to expand early childhood initiatives.

Actions

- 4.1** Develop a resource hub—using *All In For Kansas Kids* communication channels—of strategies and successful approaches to public-private partnerships in Kansas communities.
- 4.2** Document the necessary resources and policy improvements to scale local partnership models designed to expand family access to child care.
- 4.3** Develop various fiscal approaches to supporting families during the early childhood years. Promote these approaches to the private sector, improving their understanding of diverse regional needs and investment opportunities.
- 4.4** Establish local and/or regional child care partnerships that build on the state-level Go Team efforts²⁴ to help communities identify solutions to child care challenges.
- 4.5** Publicize family-friendly workplace strategies and resources (paid parental leave, flexible schedules, subsidized child care, etc.) through allinforkansaskids.org, governance group communication channels, and working groups that promote employer-driven support for families.
- 4.6** Work with the Kansas Department of Commerce to encourage businesses who receive economic incentives to include plans for addressing the child care needs of their workforce.
- 4.7** Establish a network of standing early childhood coalitions across Kansas by continuing to invest in the **Communities-in-Action model**²⁵ and similar coalition-building supports.

Communities-in-Action Model

This is a program developed and implemented by Child Care Aware of Kansas that helps communities identify solutions to their local child care challenges. These Communities-in-Action (CIA) are coming together in coalitions of all shapes and sizes to better understand the child care landscape in their community, including the needs and preferences of their local families, child care workforce, and business and civic leaders. In the last three years, 36 CIA events with representatives from 72 communities have sprung up across Kansas with many small-scale solutions already in the works, such as those initiated by the Child Care Task Force of Ellis County.

The Hays Chamber of Commerce started the Child Care Task Force of Ellis County in September of 2021 to address employers' workforce concerns around the lack of child care and the 2021 Community Health Needs Assessment results. The task force has an active and diverse membership including economic development and civic leaders, school district partners, and childcare providers. The task force leveraged a CIA workshop to establish relationships with child care providers, solicit investment from local businesses, apply for outside funding, and establish a workforce pool. These efforts are helping expand child care capacity in Hays.

Progress Tracking Plan

- The number of businesses using the Employer Child Care Tax Credit.²⁶
- The number of businesses building child care into their economic development plans when entering incentive negotiations with the state.
- The number of communities with an operating early childhood coalition.
- The number of public-private partnerships shared on the resource hub for communities.

GOAL 5

Support policies and initiatives that increase capacity, enhance quality, improve access to services, and contribute to economic security for families.

Actions

- 5.1** Make it easier for families to access federal and state resources that address basic needs.
- 5.2** Foster economic stability and reduce financial strain on working families during the early childhood years by adopting pro-family policies such as **paid family leave** and expanded access to child care assistance.
- 5.3** Increase use of federal child care assistance (subsidy) by both providers and families.
- 5.4** Identify braided funding opportunities and administrative flexibilities within federal guidelines for early childhood supports (e.g. MIECHV,²⁷ CCDF²⁸) to increase capacity and improve access to services.
- 5.5** Analyze administrative policies and contracts governing state-to-local funding to ensure communities have maximum flexibility to allocate resources for their unique local needs.
- 5.6** Maximize use of Medicaid to serve children ages birth to 5 and their families by:
 - identifying covered services that aren't currently being billed to the extent possible,
 - exploring data sharing possibilities to improve outcomes and cost savings,
 - increasing outreach to local providers to improve understanding of Medicaid-eligible services and reimbursement procedures, and
 - approving more two-generational behavioral health approaches.
- 5.7** Explore the potential impact of administrative and policy changes on children and families through scenario planning, cost modeling, and calculator tools.
- 5.8** Develop an emergency response plan that prioritizes financial resources for expecting families and those with young children during periods of natural disasters or environmental disruptions.

Paid Family Leave

Infant care is some of the most expensive and difficult care to find. Infants require much more time and attention to care for safely, making it difficult for child care providers, particularly home-based providers, to care for them while caring for other children. Exploring supported parental leave for working parents who have recently had a child should be considered when building solutions addressing child care capacity. Parental leave is much less expensive than child care and is a straightforward program to implement. Parental leave is also good for mothers and their babies—giving them time to recover from birth, encouraging breastfeeding, and supporting caregiver attachment and brain development.

Providing support for working caregivers after the birth of a child also creates more capacity in a badly stretched system. Because infants require more care than older children, keeping infants at home with their parents has the potential to create capacity of more than one slot per infant. This direct and indirect effect on capacity makes paid family leave the least expensive way to safely expand child care capacity.

Progress Tracking Plan

- Decrease in the percentage of Kansas families with young children (or expecting) living in poverty.
- Decrease in areas of Kansas considered child care assistance deserts.
- The number of families accessing health insurance.
- The number of families with access to paid family leave.

GOAL 6

Strengthen existing tools and create new resources to ensure providers offer families seamless transitions in support of their child’s interests, healthy social-emotional development, and academic potential.

Actions

- 6.1** Strengthen partnerships between elementary schools and early childhood providers. Identify effective kindergarten transition methodologies across the state and nationally, with a focus on improving support for children living in rural and frontier regions.
- 6.2** Promote inclusive practices and providing accompanying supports so that all children from ages birth to 5 can participate in early childhood programs together, including: children with, or at risk of, developmental delays and children with special health care needs.
- 6.3** Enhance and align data collection and monitoring efforts to identify and address disparities.
- 6.4** Expand uptake of the statewide ASQ Online system²⁹ among service providers who directly support families with children ages birth to 5 to ensure families get appropriate access to developmental screening and early intervention services.
- 6.5** Increase routine screening, referral practices, and reimbursements—where appropriate—within programs that directly support young children birth to 5. Identify and address geographic gaps in screening services to ensure families in rural areas have equal access.
- 6.6** Recognize the prenatal period as a significant transition and an opportunity to introduce families to services in the continuum of early childhood programs (e.g. WIC, Medicaid services, home visiting, Child Care Assistance, **Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library**).³⁰

Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library

As of July 2024, over 75,000 children are enrolled. This is roughly 42% of the Total Eligible Population (TEP) of Kansas children birth to 5. This is an increase from 22% (~42,000) in 2021, when Kansas started expanding Imagination Library coverage. The Dollywood Foundation defines full enrollment as 65% of eligible children enrolled. As of July 2024, 12 counties were at or above 65% enrollment with the highest being Comanche County at 92%.

Progress Tracking Plan

- The Kansas Can Star Recognition (Kindergarten Readiness) rating³¹ of school districts partnering with local early childhood care providers to ensure smooth transitions.
- The number of early childhood programs using the state ASQ Online system/Kindergarten Readiness Snapshot participation rate.
- The percent of incoming kindergarten students developmentally “on track” within the state ASQ Online system.
- The number of children/families participating in a home visiting program (including prenatal).
- Percent of eligible families participating in prenatal programs.



PILLAR 2

Early Childhood Workforce & Environments

Our workforce is the heartbeat of the Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem. Highly qualified and valued professionals are key to creating the consistent, safe, and high-quality experiences we want for our young children. Shortages in the number of highly qualified early childhood professionals is a particular point of emphasis in this plan, as it has implications for child and family well-being and the Kansas economy at large.

The early childhood workforce encompasses a range of professional fields including child care workers, early educators and administrators, early intervention specialists, and home visitors. We also recognize the importance of ensuring families have access to services traditionally provided by public health and behavioral health professionals. Too many Kansas communities, especially in rural and frontier areas of the state, experience limited availability of obstetricians, pediatricians, early childhood mental health professionals, dentists, dietitians and other health workers. The professionals who provide these services are an important consideration of comprehensive efforts to grow the Kansas early childhood workforce and help rural communities thrive. Goals and actions in this pillar aim to recruit, retain, and elevate high-quality professionals while also enhancing the learning environment of the children they work with.

➤ **When we invest in a high-quality early childhood workforce,³² it benefits us all through:**



Increased job satisfaction
and retention among early
childhood professionals



Increased productivity
and economic growth
for society



**More families—especially
women—participating in
the labor force**



Enhanced family well-being
and overall economic security



More job stability
and higher incomes
for working parents



Improved child development
and academic outcomes

➤ **Goal 1** Support strategies to increase the overall compensation of early childhood professionals and improve the financial sustainability of programs.

➤ **Goal 2** Build workforce capacity to provide high-quality early childhood services.

➤ **Goal 3** Support early childhood professionals to help them reach their professional development goals.

➤ **Goal 4** Support high quality programming and resources for expecting families and children in all birth to age 5 environments so they can reach appropriate developmental goals.

GOAL 1

Support strategies to increase the overall compensation of early childhood professionals and improve the financial sustainability of programs.

Actions

- 1.1** Produce a comprehensive study of exemplary wage and compensation strategies for early childhood professionals from Kansas communities and other states to inform potential local and state investments.
- 1.2** Establish a compensation ladder with a competitive wage floor and financial incentives to recruit, retain, and support advancement of a diverse early childhood workforce.
- 1.3** Scale promising differential pay programs that aim to increase infant/toddler child care slots.³³
- 1.4** Expand differential pay strategies to increase the number of professionals providing child care for children with disabilities, developmental delays, or special health care needs and those needing care during non-traditional hours.
- 1.5** Support policies that increase availability of benefit packages (e.g. paid leave, health insurance) for all early childhood professionals.
- 1.6** Ensure a full range of resources are available to support child care owners with business operations, such as budgeting, succession planning, and enrollment management.
- 1.7** Expand use of shared service networks³⁴ to meet the unique needs of multiple types of child care facilities, including family child care homes and small centers.

Progress Tracking Plan

- The median salary of early childhood professionals.
- The increase in child care providers accessing shared services and resources for business operations.
- Percent and number of early childhood professionals accessing benefit packages.

GOAL 2

Build workforce capacity to provide high-quality early childhood services.

Actions

- 2.1** Identify and implement effective models for recruiting new professionals into programs across the full continuum of early childhood services in the ecosystem.
- 2.2** Partner with higher education leaders, including the Kansas Board of Regents, to create additional degree advancement opportunities for the workforce.
- 2.3** Coordinate with the Kansas Department of Commerce to ensure economic development projects are supported in planning for the early childhood needs of working families.
- 2.4** Research and evaluate unique approaches for growing the workforce in rural regions experiencing shortages in services for expecting families and those with young children.
- 2.5** Routinely conduct exit interviews for professionals leaving the early childhood workforce to identify common challenges to remaining in their field and/or position.
- 2.6** Explore ways to reduce the impact of burnout, stress, and/or mental health challenges on the retention and turnover of early childhood professionals.
- 2.7** Ensure all state-funded professional recruitment and retention materials are available in languages other than English to support an increase in the number of professionals representing diverse communities.
- 2.8** Explore initiatives to support newly hired workers to improve onboarding and early career experiences as a retention tactic.
- 2.9** Expand innovative and effective child care initiatives, like the **Small Center Pilot**,³⁵ to provide more flexible work environments for child care professionals.
- 2.10** Pilot and expand successful approaches to collaborative home visiting funding models that increase the percentage of aid-to-local funding used for direct staffing supports.
- 2.11** Evaluate aid-to-local funding for early childhood services to identify efficiencies that can be re-allocated to increase staffing capacity.
- 2.12** Develop resources for state agencies, partners, and early childhood programs to support contingency plans for operating during or after major disruptions.

Small Center Pilot

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) child care licensing team established the Small Center concept in response to the unique child care challenges of rural communities, which often have fewer resources to meet the child care needs of multiple age groups in their communities. Four providers are in the pilot phase (launched early 2024), which is being evaluated from both the provider and family perspective. Providers in the Small Center Pilot can serve up to 24 children with different age groups without the requirement of separate classrooms that come with large center licenses. Pilot facilities partner with KDHE child care licensing to determine the right spacing needs and access points to effectively support a larger group of mixed-age children.

Progress Tracking Plan

- The number of formal education pathways for early childhood professionals.
- The number of child care facilities opened and closed.
- Percent increase in the number of early childhood professionals in Kansas by geography and by profession.
- Description of reasons early childhood professionals leave the field.

GOAL 3

Support early childhood professionals to help them reach their professional development goals.

Actions

- 3.1** Execute the Kansas Early Childhood Career Pathway³⁶ implementation plan, ensuring alignment with competencies and higher education.
- 3.2** Convene a working group to explore and recommend integration and joint professional development opportunities between child care, school-based, and home visiting offerings.
- 3.3** Stand up the Workforce Registry,³⁷ establish registry governance, and develop a plan for ongoing development and implementation statewide. Ensure equitable access and incentivize adoption.
- 3.4** Create a protocol for developing new training, mentorship, and coaching offerings that aligns with the Kansas Early Childhood Career Pathway and Kansas Core Competencies for Early Childhood Education Professionals.³⁸ Use the protocol to ensure professional development programs are of high quality and meet the diverse needs of professionals.
- 3.5** Address gaps in the offerings of linguistically- and diverse-ability-appropriate professional development for the early childhood workforce.
- 3.6** Analyze Workforce Registry data to better understand and adjust for workforce challenges and preferences.
- 3.7** Establish a routine quality improvement process for early childhood professional development offerings. Include feedback from professionals and families with young children, and focus on:
 - easing the process for accessing professional development and getting training approvals,
 - completeness/accuracy of Child Care Core Competencies,
 - effectiveness of professional development promotional efforts, and
 - adequacy of higher-level offerings for professionals with significant tenure in the field.
- 3.8** Increase the number of professional development opportunities that integrate best and/or evidence-based practices into service delivery. Focus on trauma-informed care, maternal and early childhood mental health, behavioral health, special health care needs, and early literacy.
- 3.9** Establish mentorship and coaching offerings to integrate best practices into service delivery and support knowledge transfer.

Progress Tracking Plan

- The number of child care professionals creating an individualized professional development plan (IPDP).
- The number of early childhood professionals using the workforce registry.
- The number of available trainings and formal education opportunities meeting the needs of early childhood professionals.
- Percent of positive family experiences navigating services and programs across the early childhood ecosystem.

GOAL 4

Support high quality programming and resources for expecting families and children in all birth to age 5 environments so they can reach appropriate developmental goals.

Actions

- 4.1** Help early childhood programs upgrade facilities, materials, and curriculum to ensure high-quality environments that meet the needs of all young children, particularly those with special health care needs.
- 4.2** Ensure providers supporting expecting families use effective two-generational screening practices, provide education and awareness of services, and make referrals as appropriate.
- 4.3** Support local networks, such as Local Interagency Coordinating Councils,³⁹ that champion and increase family and provider access to the statewide ASQ Online system especially in rural areas where availability may be more limited.
- 4.4** Expand Links to Quality⁴⁰ statewide to ensure consistent, high-quality, child care environments.
- 4.5** Address gaps in the availability of linguistically- and diverse-ability-appropriate learning materials.
- 4.6** Expand training offerings to ensure professionals can build proficiency in the Kansas Early Learning Standards,⁴¹ the Child Care Core Competencies, and the National Family Support Competency Framework for Family Support Professionals.⁴²
- 4.7** Promote and support models that enable young children with disabilities, developmental delays, or special health care needs to realize their full potential while fully participating in settings with their typically developing peers.
- 4.8** Create and distribute planning and training resources for early childhood programs to support mitigation, adaption, and resilience efforts for responding to natural disasters and emergencies.

Progress Tracking Plan

- The number of child care citations related to a lack of emergency preparedness.
- Percent of children developmentally “on track” within the state ASQ Online system.
- Percent increase in professional development offerings related to meeting special health care needs.
- Amount of funds spent by state agencies to address environmental, material, and curriculum upgrades for providers.
- Percent of children birth to age 5 eligible for early intervention or special education receiving these services in their chosen early childhood setting.⁴³



PILLAR 3

Experiences of Children & Families

To create the experiences our children need as described in the Blueprint, we must be laser focused on providing all Kansas families high quality, affordable services and resources that meet their needs. Ensuring these needs are met is an ongoing effort that considers the past (what have we learned from research, evaluation, bright spots, and gaps?), the present (what are parents, caregivers, professionals, and communities saying they need and want?), and the future (how can we plan and prepare for our children's future to make sure every child thrives?).

The experiences of children and families also help us gauge the health and agility of the Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem. Meaningful family engagement is foundational. Because the experiences of children and families are influenced by many factors—their demographics, where they live and work, what services and supports they seek—engagement of families from across the state creates vital input for producing better outcomes for all Kansans. Goals and actions in this pillar support learning from lived experiences, co-creating with families, and feedback loops to ensure accountability to family voice and preference. This pillar is equally concerned with helping families access services that fulfill basic needs and support their well-being, no matter where they live and work in Kansas.

➤ When children experience high-quality early childhood opportunities, they are...



23% less likely to be removed
from the home into foster care.⁴⁴



More likely to develop the cognitive and social-emotional skills that benefit them in school and life.⁴⁵

➤ Families benefit from high-quality early childhood opportunities because they...



Enable caregivers to return to or stay at work, pursue education, and become more financially independent.⁴⁶

➤ **Goal 1** Engage families in opportunities to connect and learn while encouraging family input and acting on insights from lived experience.

➤ **Goal 2** Build awareness of the services available to help families make informed decisions in support of their child's interests, healthy development, and learning.

➤ **Goal 3** Improve child well-being by increasing access to the full range of services that prioritize safe, nurturing parent/caregiver relationships and strong families.

➤ **Goal 4** Prioritize the mental health of children and families by offering accessible, multi-generational services and opportunities for connection in supportive environments.

➤ **Goal 5** Ensure families experience respectful and responsive interactions across the full continuum of early childhood services.

GOAL 1

Engage families in opportunities to connect and learn while encouraging family input and acting on insights from lived experience.

Actions

- 1.1** Prepare state agencies, coalitions, and workgroups to incorporate family engagement best practices for co-creation, and equip families to meaningfully engage in early childhood initiatives.
- 1.2** Provide connections and resources for family leaders seeking increased advocacy knowledge or leadership training.
- 1.3** Compensate families for participating in learning experiences, collaborations, and leadership activities at the state level.
- 1.4** Pilot targeted strategies for **incorporating family voices in early childhood ecosystem decision making** that minimize the burden on families.
- 1.5** Establish program policies that promote family-led peer groups at the community level to increase social connections and supports for families during the early childhood years.
- 1.6** Look for and celebrate bright spots in communities around co-creating with families.
- 1.7** Create safe spaces and accessible ways for families to share stories of lived experiences. Routinely invite participation and develop reliable methods to act on insights and barriers.
- 1.8** Turn family input and feedback into action and positive change.

Incorporating Family Voices in Early Childhood Ecosystem Decision Making

The Family First Family Council is a body of 20 community members with lived expertise who coordinate with the Kansas Department for Children and Families to provide oversight and strategic direction on programs supported by Family First funding.⁴⁷ The Family Council drives their own agenda as a group, reviews and interprets data, engages in community education, and makes recommendations to federal, state, local, and agency policy. Members also represent their regions on the Kansas Interagency and Community Advisory Board to drive regional decision making from the family perspective.

Progress Tracking Plan

- The number of parent/caregiver/family members trained to engage in leadership activities in early childhood initiatives.
- The number of state agency requests for proposals (RFPs) requiring plans for family leadership input as a proposal requirement.
- The number of initiatives providing compensation to families engaging in leadership activities.

GOAL 2

Build awareness of the services available to help families make informed decisions in support of their child’s interests, healthy development, and learning.

Actions

- 2.1** Distribute information on healthy development and screening within programs that serve expecting families and those with young children, including family resource centers,⁴⁸ maternal health providers, and partners in the broader ecosystem (e.g. public play places, physical health settings, elementary schools).
- 2.2** Ensure community-based facilities (e.g. family resource centers, public health facilities) are equipped with information on the programs and resources available to help expecting families and families with young children understand, navigate, and access early childhood services.
- 2.3** Co-create and publicize resources to increase family understanding of healthy development milestones and how to request screening services.
- 2.4** Ensure early childhood ecosystem websites and online resources prioritize family-friendly language and clear information for both expecting families and those with young children.
- 2.5** Co-create artifacts that document the lived and preferred experiences of families as they navigate the services and programs that support children during the prenatal period and early years.
- 2.6** Effectively incorporate community efforts that support pregnant moms and expecting family units into early childhood ecosystem planning and funding decisions, including mental health and poverty-related programs.

Progress Tracking Plan

- The number of users accessing information from state agency and partner websites (e.g. allinforkansaskids.org, Child Care Aware, Help Me Grow, etc.).
- The number of children screened using the state ASQ Online system.

GOAL 3

Improve child well-being by increasing access to the full range of services that prioritize safe, nurturing parent/caregiver relationships and strong families.

Actions

- 3.1** Streamline agreements between the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and appropriate entities to support automatic enrollment or referral to eligible services when families sign up for WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children). Likewise, support referrals to WIC from other appropriate services.
- 3.2** Study geographic gaps in prevention activities across the continuum of early childhood services, and work to increase well-being supports in rural, high-poverty, and other traditionally underserved areas.
- 3.3** Support models or approaches that prioritize parent-child bonding during situations where parents are receiving substance abuse treatment or involved with the criminal justice system.
- 3.4** Prioritize referrals for families in need of concrete supports to the appropriate resource (e.g. food, shelter, child care, broadband, healthcare, and newborn supports).
- 3.5** Identify and leverage resources, programs, and policies that bolster efforts to create **family-friendly workplaces in Kansas**.
- 3.6** Support the work of the Kansas Fights Addiction initiative,⁴⁹ specifically ensuring that the early childhood perspective is incorporated into community solutions and interventions.
- 3.7** Identify and leverage resources, programs, and policies that bolster efforts to increase overall family well-being.

Family Friendly Workplaces in Kansas (Family Forward Toolkit)

Family Forward Workplaces is an innovative initiative to improve children's health and well-being and keep Kansas's businesses and workplaces competitive. It is employer-led change to increase access to research-based, family friendly practices—big and small—that improve workplace productivity, recruitment and retention; grow a strong economy; and support children's healthy development. In the Guide to Family Forward Workplaces, you'll find evidence-based guidance on benefits that positively impact child health and well-being and provide a positive return on investment for employers; information about each benefit and its impact; sample policies and case studies from employers who successfully implemented family friendly policies and steps for how to get started when implementing new policies or enhancing existing ones.

Progress Tracking Plan

- Child and family well-being domains showing improvement.
- Percent of expecting families accessing prenatal care.

GOAL 4

Prioritize the mental health of children and families by offering accessible, multi-generational services and opportunities for connection in supportive environments.

Actions

- 4.1** Promote the importance and availability of behavioral health services for parents with information on the connection to early childhood health and well-being. Work to increase access to behavioral health resources by removing financial, social, and physical barriers, especially for families living in rural areas with a lack of available options.
- 4.2** Expand maternal health services and improve outcomes for new parents through initiatives that support their unique needs during the postpartum transition period.
- 4.3** Expand **mandated supporter** training programs to include guidance on responding to substance use concerns during periods of pregnancy and postpartum.
- 4.4** Conduct an environmental scan of available behavioral health services for new and expecting parents, infants, and young children, and identify policies and strategies, such as expanding Medicaid codes, to make these services more widely available and accessible to all.
- 4.5** Train early childhood primary care providers across the state to better recognize and effectively make referrals around parent mental health.
- 4.6** Support holistic recovery of children who have lived through natural disasters by addressing physical and mental health needs.
- 4.7** Identify strategies to address behavioral and mental health care deserts for parents and young children.

Mandated Supporter

A mandated supporter refers to an individual who plays a crucial role in maintaining the well-being and safety of children. By providing families with resources such as counseling, financial assistance, and substance abuse treatment, mandated supporters help create a stable and nurturing environment for children. Mandated supporter is a term used in child welfare in place of “mandated reporter” to signal a shift in practice. Mandated reporters are professionals required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect. While this statutory requirement still applies to those professionals, the term mandated supporter recognizes the dual role of these providers to also deliver support. It also recognizes the role of the community in meeting family needs and preventing crises that can lead to child welfare system involvement. This shift is helping us transition from a system that merely reacts to problematic home situations to a true prevention system. Meeting needs within the community proactively reduces stressors and risk factors within the family, thereby preventing situations that might otherwise lead to crises and the necessity of a mandated report.

Progress Tracking Plan

- The number of professionals trained to effectively make referrals in support of parent mental health.
- The number of counties considered behavioral healthcare deserts.

GOAL 5

Ensure families experience respectful and responsive interactions across the full continuum of early childhood services.

Actions

- 5.1** Train early childhood professionals to better understand and identify ways to provide linguistically- and diverse-ability-appropriate experiences.
- 5.2** Increase access to multi-lingual translation and education services for children ages birth to 5 and their families.
- 5.3** Communicate in ways that are responsive to the unique needs and preferences of children and families and that help build trust between professionals and families. Work with families to understand and leverage existing trustworthy resources in the community.
- 5.4** Develop multi-lingual and easily understandable parent education materials and resources for all birth to 5 services and settings.
- 5.5** Connect children and families to needed services by partnering with community mutual-aid networks and faith-based organizations. Consider ways these and other partnerships can facilitate social interaction/ connection for families and early childhood professionals experiencing isolation or disconnection.

Progress Tracking Plan

- Percent of families reporting positive attitudes and experiences with early childhood services.
- The number of bilingual or multi-lingual early childhood professionals.
- Demographic characteristics of families receiving early childhood services and the professionals providing services.





Pathways to Action

This is a five-year plan with roles and responsibilities for early childhood champions at both the state and local levels. Families and caregivers, policymakers, business and community leaders, service organizations, and the professionals caring for Kansas children are equally critical for ensuring we reach our goals. There are many ways to get involved and take action.

- Local Pathways
- State Pathways
- Funding Pathways
- Accountability Pathways

Local Pathways

Within communities, there's a range of teams, workgroups, coalitions, and committees from both state agencies and local organizations that have subject-matter expertise and the resources to implement this plan's goals and actions. Early childhood champions are at work in communities across the state, addressing challenges and advocating for our youngest Kansans. Examples of local entities are detailed below, including the unique focus area of each group. Getting involved in these local efforts—or starting your own initiative if you have gaps in your community—is an immediate pathway to action. Reach out to service providers in your community to connect or visit allinforkansaskids.org for more ideas on how to get involved.

Community-led Child Care Coalitions

These coalitions are usually formed with the purpose of addressing child care capacity within their communities as well as working towards quality childcare and smooth kindergarten transitions. For a list of some of these local coalitions, please visit: ks.childcareaware.org/childcare-coalitions.

Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICC)s

LICCs are made up of community members with a vested interest in system improvement of services for children birth to 5 and their families. LICCs are responsible for many things, from screening and identification services to communication and collaboration among community partners on issues pertinent to the population they represent. For more information on LICCs please visit: kansasicc.ksde.org/local-icc/licc-contact.

Family Resource Centers (FRCs)

Family resource centers are community or school-based drop-in centers located in a variety of settings including schools, libraries, community centers, housing complexes, and faith-based buildings. They offer a safe, strength-based setting for family-oriented on-site programs, resources, activities, and classes designed to strengthen families. FRCs provide multiple services for diverse families and children that help increase protective factors and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

Parent Engagement Groups

Parent engagement groups, like Head Start Policy Councils, are comprised of parents and community members who lead and help make decisions about the programs they are involved in to help ensure programs are providing appropriate services for their families. To become involved in these efforts inquire with your direct service provider to see if they hold parent or client engagement groups.

Local LiveWell or Healthy Community Groups

These groups generally strive to improve health and preventative services in their communities as well as educate community members about how to live a healthy lifestyle. For more information about some of the local healthy community groups please visit: bcbsks.com/blue-health-initiatives/pathways/grantees.

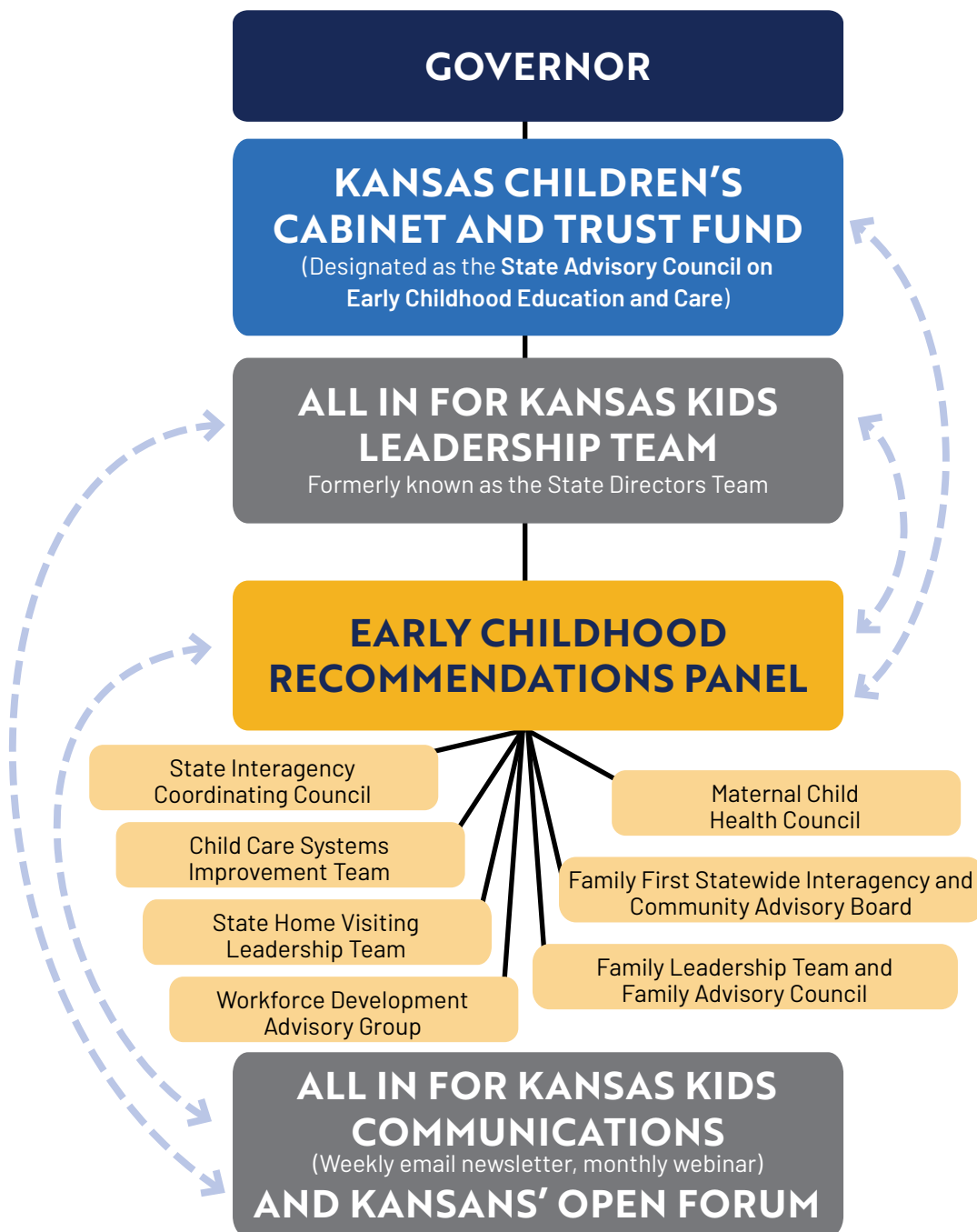
Kansas Perinatal Community Collaborative (KPCC)

This model brings together public health and clinical care services to assure continuous and coordinated care for pregnant people and their families. For more information please visit: kdhe.ks.gov/549/Perinatal-Community-Collaborative.

State Pathways

The Kansas Early Childhood Governance structure creates space for Kansans to have discussions, elevate ideas, and work together to take action toward goals. The various groups within this structure and their focus areas are detailed below. Each group holds routine meetings (most of them are live streamed for public viewing) and offers opportunities to collaborate across experiences and communities. Learning more about these groups, attending any public meetings, or even applying to formally join the membership are all pathways to action.

Kansas Early Childhood Governance Structure



Early Childhood Recommendations Panel

- Working group of the Kansas Children's Cabinet in its role as Kansas Early Childhood Advisory Council⁵⁰
- Made up of key program and state agency staff and parents, as defined in executive order
- Identifies and responds to challenges across the ECE ecosystem
- Utilizes a working group structure to tackle Strategic Plan actions
- Strengthens connections and awareness between community- and state-level efforts

Maternal Child Health Council

- Advisory group to KDHE Title V/Maternal Child Health programs (prenatal to age 18)
- Made up of state partners, local public health entities, community-based organizations, medical professionals, and families
- Elevates maternal health needs of Kansans and offers ideas for improving outcomes

Home Visiting Leadership Group

- Made up of state Home Visiting (HV) administrators (MIECHV, Family First, etc.) and program leads from the different HV models, including Parents as Teachers, Head Start, and Healthy Families America
- Reviews HV needs assessment and outcomes data, and recommends improvements to HV practices, competencies, and policies
- Looks for ways to align HV services across models to better meet family needs

Family Leadership Team

- Made up of parents and caregivers, and state agency staff leading family engagement initiatives
- Provides guidance on family engagement and outreach policies and practices
- Ensure family voices are included in state-level decision making

Family Advisory Council

- Made up of families and caregivers with diverse lived experiences, including children with special health care needs
- Ensures family perspectives are included in KDHE Title V family and child health program efforts, including planning, evaluation, service delivery, and policy development

Child Care Systems Improvement Team

- Made up of state agency staff, state partners, and community leaders involved in child care policy, licensing, workforce supports, and capacity building
- Reviews and recommends quality improvement efforts for KDHE Child Care Licensing, including on regulations, resources and toolkits, and communications

State Interagency Coordinating Council

- Provides guidance and recommendations to state agencies on services for children birth to age 5 with, or at risk of, developmental delays or disabilities
- Membership established in federal law and state statute⁵¹

Family First Statewide Interagency and Community Advisory Board

- Supports implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act and work of the Kansas Strong collaboration
- Made up of state agency staff, court system representatives, parents, and youth leaders
- Works to create meaningful and lasting change for the Kansas child welfare system

Workforce Development Advisory Group

- Ensures a coordinated and comprehensive approach to early childhood workforce development in Kansas
- Represents multiple state and local agencies/ organizations working on development of workforce core competencies, conducting annual needs assessments, and creating a process for individualized professional development plans

Funding Pathways

Achieving the vision of every child thrives—and meeting the goals of this strategic plan—requires significant, consistent resources and broad-based support from both public and private sources. The spotlight on early childhood in recent years has made it clear that understanding how early childhood services are currently funded is an important starting point for securing additional investments. Kansas funds its early childhood ecosystem through a combination of local, state, and federal sources.

Federal Sources

Administered by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment

- Maternal Child Health (MCH)
- Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

Administered by the Department for Children and Families

- Child Care Development Fund (CCDF)
- Family First Preservation Services (FFPSA)
- Head Start and Early Head Start
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

As referenced earlier, for 25 years Kansas has dedicated its Tobacco Master Settlement funds toward meeting the needs of our next generation. The resulting Children's Initiatives Fund ensures that roughly \$50 million each year is directed exclusively toward Kansas-specific early childhood efforts with flexibility to meet evolving and unique community needs. The Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem has also benefited from short-term federal grant funding over the past few years. These sources include the Preschool Development Birth-5 grant (2019-2024), and one-time pandemic relief funding at federal, state, and local levels (2020-2026).

Locally, both individual families and entire communities have been contributing to early childhood services and supports for decades. Family fees for child care services represent a significant source of funds. Philanthropic organizations have long been generously supporting an array of early childhood programs, and private business investments are on the rise, particularly for child care. Communities continue to champion early childhood funding, demonstrating commitment through bond issues and other public-driven local efforts.

Currently, the early childhood ecosystem is funded through a patchwork of sources that are largely insufficient in covering the true costs of high-quality, accessible care and education. We must continue to draw from existing sustainable sources, but to meet the goals of this plan, we also need new, consistent, long-term funding. Pathways to action for increased early childhood funding include leveraging flexibility in federal funding to maximize impact, establishing or strengthening private sector partnerships, and enhancing strategic, state-level investments.

Accountability Pathways

The goals in the plan are written broadly, identifying ways to “operationalize” the Blueprint Building Blocks—ensuring healthy development, strong families, and early learning. The actions supporting goals in this plan are just a start. They are meant to grow and change with new ideas and signs of progress. Tactical plans and timelines, as they are produced by champions of this plan, may either be phased, happening concurrently, or dependent on other actions to happen first. Certain actions may hinge on decisions made by local or state government. The Kansas Early Childhood Governance structure helps ensure all of us stay connected and informed of changes and progress that influence the entire ecosystem and the work happening in service of this plan’s goals and actions.

To keep this plan a “living document,” the **All In For Kansas Kids Leadership Team** will:

- Engage agency leaders, equip and empower employees to take action toward goals, and align agency resources and actions in service of this plan.
- Assess progress on goals regularly to course correct as needed and to share both lessons learned and bright spots with families and communities statewide.
- Prepare regular updates for review and action by Early Childhood Governance groups, and use *All In For Kansas Kids* communication channels to share information and opportunities for action more broadly.
- Analyze this plan’s metrics and our state’s needs assessments to determine progress and impact, and to adjust the plan as needed to reach goals.





Conclusion

The Kansas early childhood ecosystem is working collaboratively more than ever before, and the resilient professionals providing care and education for our youngest Kansans are being acknowledged more and more for the skilled work they do—despite, on average, earning well below a living wage. Reflecting on the original **2020 All In For Kansas Kids Strategic Plan**, we can appreciate just how far we’ve come in a few short, tumultuous years. The public conversation around early childhood is robust and nuanced, and we now benefit from many more early childhood champions at work in communities and across multiple sectors of our economy. Local efforts are more innovative than ever, and Kansans are leading the way—not just here at home, but nationally as well—in changing how we support the well-being of children and families, expand child care capacity, and use futures thinking to anticipate tomorrow’s challenges and solutions.

Yet there is still much work to do. We are more informed, committed, and stronger in number than ever, but 212,462 young Kansans and their families continue to rely on all of us to propel momentum forward. The **2024 All In For Kansas Kids Needs Assessment** revealed the challenges—new and persisting—that we must overcome, and this strategic plan describes the many pathways to action we can take to see meaningful change.

We must continue to take advantage of this moment to ensure that every child thrives. This is not a vision or a challenge for any one organization or state agency alone. It is an invitation to join in the ongoing work of giving all children in Kansas—and their families—the very best start. An invitation to look far into the future to anticipate how to best meet tomorrow’s needs today—to become ***All In For Kansas Kids***.

OUR VISION

Every Child Thrives

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

We are on a journey toward a Kansas in which...



Children and families thrive in caring and connected communities.



High-quality early childhood programs and services are accessible and available.



The early childhood workforce is valued and respected.



Our resources and investments align with our vision.

Contributions

Thank you to all who contributed their insights and ideas to the **2024 All In For Kansas Kids Strategic Plan** through feedback sessions and our online form, including the following groups:

- Child Care Providers Coalition of Kansas
- Communities in Action
- Family Advisory Council
- Family First Interagency and Community Advisory Board
- Family Leadership Team
- Governor's Public Health Conference
- Kansas Department of Health and Environment
- Kansas Division of Early Childhood
- Kansas Home Visiting
- Part C Coordinators
- Early Childhood Recommendations Panel
- State Interagency Coordinating Council
- Workforce Development Advisory Group

Your voices are vital for ensuring goals and actions reflect what is needed to help every child thrive in Kansas.

GET CONNECTED

You too can be an active contributor to this plan via the website where you will find regular updates on progress toward our collective goals as well as opportunities to contribute ideas and experiences on this shared journey toward ensuring every child thrives.

allinforkansaskids.org

ENDNOTES

- 1 Center on the Developing Child (2007). The Science of Early Childhood Development (InBrief). Retrieved from developingchild.harvard.edu.
- 2 The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study reports that 70% of children in high-quality early education programs were rated as well-prepared for kindergarten, compared to 50% of their peers in lower-quality programs. The NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development shows that children participating in early childhood programs were 30% more likely than control groups to achieve higher scores in reading and math in elementary school.
- 3 Participation in early childhood programs reduces the likelihood of needing special education services later in life. The Abecedarian Project demonstrated a 48% reduction in special education placements among participants. Graduates of a high-quality early childhood program in Kansas—The Opportunity Project—were 36% less likely than their peers to need special education services throughout their schooling.
- 4 The HighScope Perry preschool experiment reveals that individuals who participated in the program have a 65% high school graduation rate compared to 45% for non-participants. Children who participated in the Chicago Longitudinal Study had a high school completion rate of 71.4%, compared to 54.5% for those who did not participate.
- 5 The Abecedarian Project has shown that individuals who received high-quality early childhood education were less likely to engage in criminal activity as adults. Participants in the project had significantly lower rates of misdemeanor and felony arrests. The HighScope Perry preschool experiment shows that children who attended high-quality early learning programs had 19% lower arrest rates and 70% fewer arrests for a violent crime than similar children who did not participate.
- 6 Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund. (2023). Distinct count of children data dashboard. <https://kschildrenscabinet.org/ecids-dashboard/>
- 7 All In For Kansas Kids. (2020a). 2019 needs assessment. <https://kschildrenscabinet.org/all-in-for-kansas-kids/needs-assessment/>
- 8 All In For Kansas Kids. (2020b). Early childhood strategic plan. <https://kschildrenscabinet.org/project/2020-strategic-plan/>
- 9 The Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG) is a federal competitive grant program through the Administration for Children and Families. Grants are distributed to states and territories to support early childhood services for children birth to age five. Funds support efforts to conduct needs assessments, develop strategic plans, engage families, improve quality, and address workforce compensation and supports. PDG grants support improved collaboration among early childhood programs and the broader ecosystem. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/early-learning/preschool-development-grants>
- 10 All In For Kansas Kids. (2024). 2024 Needs Assessment. <https://kschildrenscabinet.org/project/2024-needs-assessment/>
- 11 The Blueprint for Early Childhood (Blueprint) originated in 2014 and incorporated several cross sector efforts to build a Kansas early childhood system. The current Blueprint, updated in July 2024, adds the voices of over 6,100 Kansans and aligns efforts of the Cabinet and other state agencies. Partnering agencies include the Kansas Department for Children and Families, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and the Kansas State Department of Education. Methods for ensuring a solid foundation in early childhood are presented in the Blueprint and organized into three building blocks: Healthy Development, Strong Families, and Early Learning. The Blueprint recognizes the early years as a critical period for intervention that establishes a child's foundation for school and life success. The document provides common language, a shared vision, and guidance for cross-sector collaboration in the delivery of high-quality programs and services. Together, the Blueprint and the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan align the activities of agencies and providers in our state's ecosystem around common goals.
- 12 *All In For Kansas Kids (All In)* is the official strategic plan and package of comprehensive early childhood initiatives aimed at optimizing our state's early childhood ecosystem to help ensure every child thrives. The *All In* initiative is led by a group of state agency directors responsible for various aspects of early child and family services. Collaboration among state agencies, local communities, providers, educators, and families through *All In* is key for realizing a more cohesive and effective system.
- 13 The Kansas Early Childhood Recommendations Panel (Panel) is the working group of the Kansas Early Childhood Advisory Council. The Panel plays a key role in enabling our state to implement the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan, respond to challenges, elevate recommendations from communities, and make decisions that help us achieve the vision of every child thriving.
- 14 The Child Care Systems Improvement Team (CCSIT) is an advisory group to KDHE that focuses on child care licensing. CCSIT membership includes leaders from across the state and early childhood care and education system.
- 15 The Workforce Development Advisory Group (WDAG) is comprised of subject matter experts who review and recommend best practices, tools, and processes for the early childhood workforce in Kansas. The goal is to strengthen professional development, core competencies, and infrastructure to empower the workforce.

- 16 Nobel prize winning professor of economics, James Heckman, found that starting earlier achieves greater economic and social gains. Professor Heckman's latest research presents "The Heckman Equation," demonstrating that high-quality birth-to-five programs for disadvantaged children can deliver a 13% per year return on investment—a rate substantially higher than the 7-10% return previously established for preschool programs serving 3- to 4-year-olds.
- 17 Professor Heckman's latest research on the Perry Preschoolers at midlife finds multi-generation gains for the participants and children of participants in the areas of education, health, employment and civic life. The research provides a compelling indication that early childhood education can be an effective way to break the cycle of poverty.
- 18 1-800-CHILDREN, powered by the Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL), serves as a statewide call line and resource directory. 1-800-CHILDREN addresses parenting questions, judgment-free, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by phone, app, website, and email. 1800childrenks.org
- 19 Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. SDOH can be grouped into five domains: economic stability, education access and quality, health care access and quality, neighborhood and built environment, and social and community context.
<https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>
- 20 IRIS is an online bi-directional referral tool that streamlines communications between community providers offering services to individuals and families. IRIS helps partners identify available resources, make referrals, and monitor whether families receive the help they choose. The IRIS approach guides communities to facilitate that change themselves. Commitment, collaboration, and accountability shape the change and generate successful connections for families.
- 21 Kansas Data Trust Authorized Projects are projects that have been documented, reviewed, and approved to be executed by the Kansas Data Trust. To be approved, projects must include at least two data sets from two different agencies and there must be a data sharing agreement in place that outlines the purpose, data security measures, and data elements to be shared.
- 22 The P20W State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) is a statewide database that collects, validates, and connects information from early childhood through K-12 education, postsecondary education, and the workforce. The SLDS provides valuable cross-sector data insights critical for evaluating programs and informing policy decisions that positively impact children and families.
- 23 The Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust represents a group of agencies that provide services to young children and their families who seek to integrate data from their agency with data from other agencies to evaluate the needs of the early childhood system. <https://kschildrencabinet.org/data-trust>
- 24 The Child Care Go Team (CCGT) mobilizes local, regional, and state resources to address community-specific needs/barriers to building child care capacity. Specific services include identification of community assets, resources, and funding; child care solution design; navigation of state and local licensing/building regulations; subsidy enrollment support for families; and connection to quality enhancements and best practices for child care.
- 25 Communities In Action workshops offer a "one-stop" experience for community teams looking to address child care capacity concerns. Each workshop provides opportunities for community teams to learn from early childhood experts, receive customized child care supply/demand data, identify and develop short- and long-term goals during structured planning time with an expert community coach, and receive a child care capacity toolkit.
- 26 The Kansas Child Day Care Assistance Tax Credit helps employers cover some of the costs associated with providing child care services to their employees. A business that provides these services is entitled to a tax credit against their income tax liability.
- 27 The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) is a federal grant opportunity that supports home visiting for expectant and new parents with children up to kindergarten-entry age who live in communities that are at-risk for poor maternal and child health outcomes. Families voluntarily participate in home visiting programs and partner with health, social service, and child development professionals to set and achieve goals that improve health and well-being. The program builds upon decades of research showing that home visits during pregnancy and early childhood improve the lives of children and families. Home visiting helps prevent child abuse and neglect, supports positive parenting, improves maternal and child health, and promotes child development and school readiness. The MIECHV Program is administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration in partnership with the Administration for Children and Families.
- 28 The Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) is the largest federal funding for states to help low-income families afford child care. CCDF provides families with child care assistance; assists with quality improvement, skill-building, and professional development for the early childhood care and education (ECCE) workforce; and provides consumer education to help parents select child care that meets their needs. Every state administers Child Care and Development Block Grant, with the lead agency for CCDF designated by the Governor. The Kansas Department for Children and Families is the Kansas CCDF lead agency.

- 29 ASQ Online system: Through the All In For Kansas Kids initiative Kansas provides statewide access to the Ages & Stages Questionnaires® (ASQ) Online. The Statewide ASQ Online System makes it easier for organizations to serve families through developmental screening. By participating in developmental screening, providers of all kinds can assess a child's development, address any potential concerns, and connect families to services and supports in their community. All Kansas elementary schools are required to partner with families to better understand incoming kindergarten students' development using this tool. The ASQ Online is also available to any community partner serving children ages zero to five.
- 30 The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children—better known as the WIC program—serves to safeguard the health of low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating including breastfeeding promotion and support, and referrals to health care.
- Medicaid is a state–federal partnership jointly funded by states and federal government to assist with providing medical care to eligible people. Within broad federal guidelines, each state establishes its own eligibility standards; determines the type, amount, duration, and scope of services; sets the rate of payment for services; and administers its own program. Broadly, there are four major eligibility groups covered by most states: children, adults with disabilities, aged adults, and nondisabled adults.
- Home visiting supports the healthy development and well-being of children and families. While each home visiting model is unique, in general, home visiting involves three main intervention activities conducted through one-on-one interactions between home visitors and families: assessing family needs, educating and supporting parents, and referring families to needed services in the community. Early childhood home visiting programs aim to improve a wide range of outcomes including maternal health, child health and development, child maltreatment prevention, and family economic self-sufficiency.
- Child Care Assistance, also known as child care subsidy, is available for qualifying families who need help paying for child care costs. The Kansas Department for Children and Families' Child Care Assistance Program supports working families who meet initial income eligibility requirements, families participating in qualified education or training, teen parents completing high school or their GED, and families who receive Cash Assistance (TANF) taking part in work programs.
- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is open to any Kansas child from birth to their 5th birthday. Children receive free, age-appropriate books mailed directly to their home every month to help nurture a love for reading and enrich their lives.
- 31 The Kansans Can Star Recognition program recognizes communities that offer quality, inclusive opportunities to young children and their families so that each student enters kindergarten at age 5 socially, emotionally and academically prepared for success. <https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Fiscal-and-Administrative-Services/Communications-and-Recognition-Programs/Vision-Kansans-Can/Kansans-Can-Star-Recognition/Qualitative-Measures/Kindergarten-Readiness>
- 32 Devercelli, A. E., & Beaton-Day, F. (2020, December). Better Jobs and Brighter Futures: Investing in Childcare to Build Human Capital. WorldBank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/a5e7a52e-115c-5dd1-97e6-c1b062c945c9/content>
- 33 For example, the Baby Steps initiative is an innovative pilot that seeks not only to offset the revenue lost by caring for infants and toddlers, but also to bring family child care providers' incomes closer to what might be considered a "livable" wage. In addition to financial incentives, participating child care programs also receive support from the Kansas' Infant Toddler Specialist Network and other programs working to improve the quality of care for young children.
- 34 Shared service networks, or hubs, are designed to help groups of child care programs reduce costs, improve the strength of management, and enhance quality of services by sharing administrative functions with other organizations that provide the same types of services. By participating in a Shared Service Network, child care providers benefit from services that cost less — and that are often more efficient — than what the programs could do on their own. These entities are often based locally, serving a network of providers in the same community or region.
- 35 The Small Center Pilot is a new approach to space and staffing under the "child care center" license type which KDHE is piloting for mixed-age care settings.
- 36 The Kansas Early Childhood Career Pathway represents the career, support, and training options available to early childhood professionals. This tool recognizes the importance of high-quality early childhood experiences for children, families, communities, and the state. The career pathway guides professionals in the field towards resources and opportunities to support their professional goals. <https://allforkansaskids.org/career-pathway/>
- 37 The Workforce Registry is a platform that integrates access to training opportunities and supports, professional development resources, and personal management tools into a single online source. The Workforce Registry supports early childhood professionals by creating a standard framework for organizing goals, credentials, and degree opportunities.
- 38 The Kansas Core Competencies for Early Childhood Education Professionals outlines the knowledge and skills required for adults to deliver high-quality early care and education to children, birth to age 8.

- 39 Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICCs) are comprised of community members with a vested interest in system improvement of services for children birth to five and their families. LICCs are responsible for many things, from child find activities, to communication and collaboration among community partners on issues pertinent to the population they represent. The state of Kansas Administration Regulation 28-4-565 states that “Each community shall have a local interagency coordinating council (LICC) that has as one of its purposes, the coordination of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.”
<https://kansasicc.ksde.org/local-icc/licc-contact>
- 40 A Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is an approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care settings. In Kansas, our QRIS is called Links to Quality and is led by the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF). Providers can earn Quality Recognition Links to demonstrate the quality of their care and highlight strengths in the areas of Program Leadership, Family Partnerships, and Learning and Development.
- 41 The Kansas Early Learning Standards (KELS) guide early childhood providers and teachers on the developmental continuum of learning for children from birth through kindergarten, i.e. what young children should know and be able to do as a result of engagement with caring knowledgeable adults, evidence-based curriculum, and developmentally appropriate activities.
- 42 The National Family Support Competency Framework is a model of skills shared by all family support professionals (FSPs), from family support workers to nurse home visitors to parent educators. FSPs work in a range of program models, such as Healthy Families America, Nurse Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, and local programs.
institute.fsp.org
- 43 Examples: Indicator 6A or Indicator 5A data collected by the state; evaluation data from programs aimed at providing early intervention or early childhood special education and related services in a child's least restrictive or natural environments.
- 44 University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research. (2022, January 1). Reducing foster care removals. Prepared and presented by the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research on behalf of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund.
<https://kschildrenscabinet.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/ROI-for-Kansas-Early-Childhood-2022.pdf>.
- 45 Schoch, A. D., Gerson, C. S., Halle, T., & Bredeson, M. (2023, August). Children's learning and development benefits from high-quality early care and education: A summary of the evidence (OPRE Report No. 2023-226). The Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, & Evaluation. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/%232023-226%20Benefits%20from%20ECE%20Highlight%20508.pdf>.
- 46 Hartley, R. P., Chaudry, A., Boteach, M., Mitchell, E., & Menefee, K. (2021). A lifetime's worth of benefits: The effects of affordable, high-quality child care on family income, the gender earnings gap, and women's retirement security. National Women's Law Center & Center on Poverty and Social Policy.
<https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/A-Lifetimes-Worth-of-Benefits-Compliant.pdf>.
- 47 The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) was signed into law as part of Public Law (P.L.) 115-123 and has several provisions to enhance support services for families to help children remain at home, reduce the unnecessary use of congregate care, and build the capacity of communities to support children and families. The law enables states and territories to use funds for prevention services, such as , evidence-based mental health programs, substance abuse prevention and treatment, in-home parent skill-based programs, and kinship navigator programs. Kansas also invests state general funds into the Family First initiative.
- 48 Family resource centers are community or school-based drop-in centers located in a variety of settings including schools, libraries, community centers, housing complexes, and faith-based buildings. They offer a safe, strength-based setting for family-oriented on-site programs, resources, activities, and classes designed to strengthen families. FRCs provide multiple services for diverse families and children that help increase protective factors and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.
- 49 In 2021, the Kansas Legislature passed the Kansas Fights Addiction Act, authorizing the state to use money recovered by the Attorney General's Office through settlements to tackle substance use disorders (SUD) and help ensure prevention and treatment services are provided throughout the state. The Kansas Fights Addiction Initiative is conducting a needs assessment that will provide an in-depth view of the state's SUD system across the lifespan and including all sectors, from early childhood and prevention through treatment and long-term recovery.
- 50 In early 2020, the governor designated the Children's Cabinet as the Kansas Early Childhood Advisory Council. Public Law 134-110 outlines the role, duties, and designee representation for State Advisory Councils (SACs). SACs are designed to ensure statewide coordination and collaboration among the wide range of early childhood programs and services in the state, including child care, Head Start, IDEA preschool and infants/family programs, and pre-kindergarten programs and services.
- 51 State Interagency Coordinating Council: Created in both state and federal law (K.S.A. 74-801 and Public Law 105-17), the Council's role is to advise and assist in the delivery of services to preschool children (birth through age 5) with special needs.



kschildrenscabinet.org



Needs Assessment



Acknowledgments

The **2024 Needs Assessment** was supported by Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five funding from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Special thanks to the leadership, staff, grantees, and partners of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, Kansas State Department of Education, Kansas Department for Children and Families, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research who provided support, guidance, and expertise throughout the process of developing and updating needs assessments and strategic plan tactics for **All In For Kansas Kids**. This information or content and conclusions should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should endorsements be inferred by, HHS, ACF, or the U.S. Government.

Suggested citation: All In For Kansas Kids. (2024). Kansas early childhood system needs assessment. Prepared by the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research on behalf of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund.
kschildrenscabinet.org/all-in-for-kansas-kids/needs-assessment

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Letter from Kansas Early Childhood State Directors Team

February 2024

In 2019, our comprehensive needs assessment identified that families' experiences are significantly impacted by where they live, and too many Kansas children grow up in families and communities where basic needs are not met. These central messages combined with key findings around workforce, infrastructure, and systems alignment shaped the focus areas of the Kansas *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan, which offered a shared vision and strategic approach to addressing the needs of families with young children. Even through an unprecedented pandemic, the commitment of Kansans to prioritize early childhood remained strong.

We have made significant progress since 2019. Improvements in our data infrastructure and expanded resources to support professionals and communities showcase system-level improvements. Young children and their families also benefited from additional resources. The statewide expansion of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, increased universal home visiting services, and expanded eligibility for Child Care Assistance represent a few of these efforts.

We begin 2024 with optimism and excitement. Early childhood is a stated priority for public officials, businesses, and community leaders alike. Over 500 Kansans – parents, elected officials, business and community leaders, and early childhood professionals – engaged in Listening Sessions over the summer. They reiterated the importance of a thriving early childhood ecosystem to meet family, employer, and community needs, and indicated support for the emerging trend of locally-driven, public-private partnerships.

Yet the data also reveal ongoing challenges. Child care deserts persist, with communities and employers searching for solutions to leverage the momentum of the state's record-breaking economic growth. Low wages and burnout hamper an already stretched early childhood workforce. Every state is having similar issues, and Kansas will need to address them in the years ahead.

Another challenge is that Kansas families continue to experience a fragmented system slow to respond to their evolving needs. The Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force recommended the state address this challenge by unifying its governance of early childhood, allowing the state to more effectively address the issues raised by partners in the needs assessment process.

With that in mind, we proudly present our comprehensive 2024 Needs Assessment. This report provides an introduction to the current Kansas early childhood landscape and a detailed account of our methods and data sources. We then dive deeper into the Kansas early childhood ecosystem, followed by sections on the needs of the early childhood workforce, and young children and their families. The final section presents a snapshot of our progress over the past five years and opportunities to meet the pressing needs of today while preparing for a vibrant future. This Needs Assessment will drive updates to the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan to chart our course for the next five years.

Ad astra, per aspera.

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Executive Summary

Findings from decades of scientific research underscore the importance of high-quality early childhood programs, services, and experiences for children's brain development and success throughout the life course. In Kansas, we are working to streamline the system of early childhood to efficiently prioritize child and family well-being across a range of programs and services. This Needs Assessment highlights the areas of greatest need for the early childhood ecosystem, workforce, and the children and families they serve. Although we note numerous recent successes and accomplishments, our primary focus is to articulate the needs that remain and require attention.

We analyzed numerous local, state, and national reports (refer to [Table A.1](#) in the appendix) to understand the early childhood ecosystem and experiences of Kansas children, families, and professionals, triangulating data whenever possible. The Needs Assessment presents distinct findings across three main sections: the Kansas early childhood Ecosystem, the Kansas early childhood Workforce, and Experiences of Children and Families. The following is a summary of significant findings for each section:

The Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem

Despite progress in collaboration on many fronts, fragmentation is a core barrier to delivering services to children and families. A coordinated governance structure has improved collaboration among state agencies, enhancing efficiency and access to services. Challenges persist due to fiscal and regulatory differences and a lack of clear lines

of decision-making authority, resulting in a disconnected and often unresponsive system for children and families. Navigating diverse requirements across different timelines inhibits local leaders from creatively blending funding streams through public-private partnerships. The implementation of authorized projects under the Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust for data-based decision-making shows promise, but partners express a desire for more flexible data sharing to fully analyze the impact of investments, highlighting the persistent challenge of navigating multiple layers of data sharing requirements.

The Kansas Early Childhood Workforce

Highly qualified professionals are key to safety, quality, and system sustainability within the early childhood ecosystem and Kansas’ economy at large. Integrated initiatives are underway to recruit, retain, and elevate these professionals, yet concerns persist about workforce sustainability due to low wages and inadequate benefits. While statewide strategies have supported child care administrators in maintaining services during workforce shortages, especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the long-term sustainability of many programs remains uncertain without a stable funding infrastructure.

Experiences of Children and Families

The mission articulated in the *All In for Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan is to build a solid foundation for Kansas children and families. Kansas is actively addressing individual child and family needs through services aimed at improving family functioning, promoting mental health, and facilitating employment. However, persistent barriers, such as inadequate health care, inflexible job opportunities, and low wages, prevent many families from meeting their basic needs and thriving. Additionally, geographical considerations influence the availability, accessibility, and affordability of early childhood programs and services, as well as basic needs. Ensuring sustainable futures for the youngest Kansans requires meeting their basic needs and providing them with access to a responsive system.

Findings



Fiscal and regulatory differences and a lack of clear lines of decision-making authority are barriers to delivering services to children and families.



The need to navigate multiple requirements and timelines inhibits local leaders and public-private partnerships from maximizing resources.



Multiple layers of data sharing requirements prevent a full analysis of the impact of investments.



Low wages and inadequate benefits are core challenges to recruiting and retaining early childhood professionals in the workforce.



The long-term sustainability of many programs families rely on remains uncertain without stable funding.



Inadequate family access to basic needs blunts the effectiveness of early childhood services.



Geographic location shapes access, affordability, and availability of early childhood services.



Introduction

The responsibility for ensuring that all Kansas children have the best possible start in life belongs to every one of us – at the individual, family, and community levels – and is rooted in the science of early childhood development. Findings from decades of scientific research underscore the importance of high-quality early childhood programs, services, and experiences. These findings represent a call to action for each of us to be *All In For Kansas Kids*.

About the Needs Assessment

We are at a critical, yet hopeful juncture in our early childhood ecosystem. COVID-19 caused significant disruptions for children and families resulting in both acute and long-term impacts. Though systemic barriers have long been embedded within the Kansas early childhood ecosystem, the pandemic brought these barriers to the forefront. The Kansas early childhood ecosystem experienced ripples of interrupted routines, missed intervention points, an increasingly overwhelmed workforce, losses in the quality and frequency of early learning experiences, and fewer opportunities for children and families to thrive.

For children, families, and the workforce, the long history of systemic barriers in the early childhood ecosystem was well documented in our comprehensive 2019 Needs Assessment. The added impact of the pandemic was captured in our Needs Assessment Updates in 2020 and 2021. Across all of our research, we have documented that families experience challenges due to the lack of available, accessible, and affordable high-quality early childhood services provided by highly qualified professionals who are adequately and sustainably compensated. Additionally, we have identified that families and professionals experience barriers navigating the early childhood ecosystem, such as

when families are trying to connect to services they need and when professionals are trying to establish or advance services and programs. Now is the time to reassess, strategize, and detail our collective commitment to this work on behalf of all Kansas children and their families.

For this year’s Needs Assessment, we examined the realities, challenges, and successes of the current early childhood ecosystem with a broad array of partners. We analyzed numerous local, state, and national reports (see [Table A.1](#) in the appendix) detailing realities and needs across all sectors. The data painted a picture of both the resilience of Kansans and persistent struggles faced by many families and professionals. Although we will discuss some of the many successes and accomplishments across our ecosystem throughout this Needs Assessment, our primary aim in this report is to articulate the greatest areas of need for the early childhood ecosystem, workforce, and children and families whom they serve. [Key Term Definitions](#) can be found in the Appendix.

All components of the Needs Assessment process included quantitative and qualitative data to generate insights and rich understandings of the themes within and across Kansas communities. Population-level data from Kansas vital records and the [U.S. Census \(2022\)](#) provided demographic and population trends, and data were utilized from the state’s [Distinct Count of Children Data Dashboard](#). Whenever possible, we triangulated data to better understand the early childhood ecosystem and experiences of Kansas children and families within this landscape.

The Needs Assessment Team at the [University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research \(KU-CPPR\)](#) led data collection, analysis, and synthesis. The team worked collaboratively across the early childhood ecosystem to ensure a complete picture of experiences and needs of children and families in Kansas. Additionally, KU-CPPR worked closely with the Kansas Early Childhood State Directors Team throughout this process.

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Where We Have Been

The comprehensive 2019 Needs Assessment initiated our recent understanding of the state of early childhood in Kansas, and demonstrated that Kansans value children's early years. The report highlighted bright spots, ripples of innovation, and historical progress, along with substantial gaps and areas of need across Kansas early childhood services and supports. Bright spots were identified in the efficient, innovative, and responsive efforts put forward by early childhood partners in communities throughout the state. Ripples of innovation included local efforts to consolidate and integrate services. However, a substantial gap was identified between the supply of and demand for high-quality early childhood programs and services. Therefore, areas of need included removing barriers for families by improving program availability and accessibility, streamlining service coordination, and focusing efforts to cultivate and sustain early childhood workforce, facilities, and infrastructure in Kansas.

The 2019 Needs Assessment offered a snapshot of where we were then, identified possibilities for system improvements, and unlocked a collective vision of an early childhood ecosystem in which all Kansas children and families can thrive. Findings from the 2019 Needs Assessment directly shaped the development of the five-year *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan (2020b). In 2020 and 2021, we provided annual Needs Assessment Updates to update data snapshots, document progress, understand setbacks, and collaboratively adjust strategies and tactics to ensure continued momentum toward a streamlined, high-quality early childhood system for all Kansas children and their families.

Kansas Early Childhood Programs and Services for Children and Families





Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five

In January 2019, Kansas was awarded an initial Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) planning grant, resulting in a comprehensive, statewide needs assessment and strategic plan. These were built collaboratively with multiple state agencies, each with the designated authority for specific early childhood services and programs. Prior to this effort, there had not been a unified space in Kansas where systems-level collaboration and decision-making among these agencies occurred.

The 2019 Needs Assessment highlighted inconsistent access to services for young children across the state and emphasized that many families in Kansas struggle to meet their basic needs. Findings from the needs assessment led to development of the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan to improve early childhood programs and services, organized by seven goal areas:

- State-level collaboration
- Community-level collaboration
- Family knowledge and choice
- Private sector collaboration
- Capacity and access
- Workforce
- Quality and environments

In May of 2020, Kansas was awarded a PDG B-5 renewal grant which, over the past three years, has provided funding and served as a catalyst to implement *All In For Kansas Kids*. Publication of the strategic plan coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Governor Laura Kelly recognized the importance of the grant to Kansas, noting that, “This grant is particularly welcome now, as the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an additional degree of stress on early childhood in Kansas. With it, we will continue to fight for the health and safety of children and families in our state.”

Over the past three years, PDG B-5 funding has supported various system-building efforts across the state to, among other initiatives:

- enhance access to child care
- engage families and ensure family knowledge and choice
- strengthen workforce development
- improve the quality of early childhood services

Importantly, resources were equitably provided to rural communities that often encounter unique barriers to accessing services and supports.

Impact of COVID-19 and the Early Childhood System's Response

As we lived through unpredictable and often overwhelming challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw how gaps in accessibility and availability of early childhood services grew wider and even more urgent (Stanford Center on Early Childhood, 2022). Data presented in the 2020 Needs Assessment Update showed evidence of widening disparities in Kansas. While there were signs of system recovery toward the latter half of 2020, the recovery itself was not uniform, and some populations were more likely to be left behind. For example, children of color continued to be more impacted by poverty, as did children from urban and densely settled rural areas (Kansas Action for Children, 2020). Data collected in 2020 also showed that Hispanic/Latino and Black families, low-income families, and families who work non-traditional hours were more likely to experience barriers accessing affordable, high-quality child care in proximity to where they lived and worked (KDHE & KU-CPPR, 2021).

The pandemic slowed *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan implementation efforts, but as state agencies worked to create emergency relief programs, this plan provided a framework for decision-making that guided our state's crisis response. Throughout 2020, we maintained a proactive approach to support a Kansas future while we worked to address the critical and immediate needs of children, families, early childhood professionals, and organizations.

The 2021 Needs Assessment Update revealed encouraging signs of recovery in Kansas:

- poverty rates declined
- unemployment rates and public preschool enrollment approached pre-pandemic levels
- families benefited from the expanded Child Tax Credit, among other relief efforts.

However, several challenges remained: insufficient wages for the early childhood workforce, child care deserts, and access to services. The 2021 Update reiterated aspects of the early childhood ecosystem that must be improved to ensure a sustainable and high-quality system in Kansas. The need for comprehensive system improvements requires that we address root causes of these challenges to ensure that every child thrives, which remains the mandate of the *All In For Kansas Kids* work.

The Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem

In Kansas, we are working to streamline the complex ecosystem of early childhood—we are shifting away from a system made up of siloed state agencies and moving toward an integrated ecosystem that efficiently prioritizes child and family well-being across a range of programs and services. When we speak of early childhood in Kansas, we describe an ecosystem focused on young children and their families, which includes high-quality child care, evidence-based and universal home visiting programs, Part C early intervention services for eligible children ages birth to three-years old and their families, maternal and child health services, preschool programs, and Part B early childhood special education services for children three- to five-years old. This early childhood ecosystem also focuses on supports that families may need, such as prevention and intervention, health care, behavioral health, and economic and employment supports.



Our vision is to ensure that all Kansas children and families have universal access to services and supports in a coordinated, high-quality early childhood ecosystem. This is no small task, nor is it a one-time effort. *All In For Kansas Kids* is a journey led by the State Directors Team, comprised of leaders from four state-level groups:



Our Vision

Every Child Thrives

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

The purpose of the State Directors Team is to streamline decision-making, provide clear direction, track benchmarks and progress, generate pathways for statewide collaboration, ensure consistent communication and messaging, anticipate challenges, and develop solutions. The State Directors Team keeps the findings of each Needs Assessment top of mind. By focusing on changes in population demographics, investments, and policies that affect children and families, state leaders can expect and communicate both positive and negative influences on the system. Rather than acting after the fact, Kansas is poised to be anticipatory and proactive in the coordination of efforts across partners.

In addition to leading the Preschool Development Grant Birth through 5 activities, the [Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund](#) (Kansas Children's Cabinet) is charged with coordination across state agencies of initiatives that improve the health, well-being, and educational outcomes of Kansas children, per [K.S.A. 38-1901](#). Kansas Children's Cabinet membership consists of five voting members appointed by the governor, four voting members appointed by legislative leadership, and six ex-officio members. The Kansas Children's Cabinet is designated as the [Kansas Early Childhood Advisory Council](#) through Governor Kelly's Executive Order No. 20-02. Together, the Kansas Children's Cabinet and State Directors Team serve as central touchpoints for the broad ecosystem in Kansas that includes many related—yet distinct—sectors of early childhood care, education, and service provision.

There are significant challenges to developing a coordinated, high-quality early childhood ecosystem. Kansas currently ranks 49th in the country for efficiency and effectiveness in operating an early childhood system (Walsh et al., 2023). Our fragmented system results in duplication of administrative effort at the state level and a maze of services for families and professionals to navigate (Hunt Institute, 2023c). To address these challenges, the first action of Governor Kelly's second term in January 2023 was [Executive Order 23-01](#) to establish an Early Childhood Transition Task Force (Task Force) to explore a "framework for a model single-agency governance structure for early childhood programming that consolidates initiatives and funding under the leadership of a new cabinet-level position." Recommendations from the Task Force were provided to and accepted by Governor Kelly in December 2023 (Hunt Institute, 2023b). More details about the timeline and development of these recommendations can be found at the end of the [Ecosystem Section on page 19](#).

Methods

This year's Needs Assessment is divided into three focus areas that are critical to understanding early childhood in Kansas:

- the early childhood ecosystem
- the early childhood workforce
- the experiences of children and families.

For each of these sections, our investigation was guided by questions derived from the findings of previous Needs Assessments and from goals and strategies articulated in the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan. They are:

Early Childhood Ecosystem

- How have relationships among state agencies and organizations influenced policy alignment and improved ecosystem efficiency? What challenges or needs persist?
- How are families and professionals connected to the right services at the right time? What is needed to maximize these efforts?
- How are data shared across agencies and used to better understand the impact of early childhood investments? What are the next steps for fully implementing the Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust?

The Early Childhood Workforce

- How effective are efforts to recruit and retain highly qualified child care professionals in Kansas? What strategies are being implemented to recruit, train, and retain highly qualified early childhood professionals? What challenges still exist for growing and strengthening the workforce?
- How is Kansas implementing high-quality, competency-based professional development? What are the gaps or barriers for professionals to access and participate in professional development opportunities?

Experiences of Children and Families

- How are families getting information about their child's growth, development, and well-being? What gaps exist in a family's access to information that can inform decision-making about services? How is family voice leveraged in decision-making about family programs, services, and practices and how can family voice continue to be leveraged?
- What challenges persist for families when trying to meet their basic needs? What are barriers to accessing early childhood programs and services?
- What needs do communities encounter when trying to provide high quality early childhood programs and services?

The Needs Assessment Team, under the direction of the State Directors Team, utilized data at local, state, and national levels to illustrate experiences of children, families, early childhood professionals, and communities, both as an integral part of, and impacted by, the early childhood ecosystem in the state. Data collection and analysis were iterative processes that began in January 2023 and continued into December. Data were integrated as they became available and were synthesized into key findings.

Methods Process



REVIEW & ANALYSIS

Examine existing Needs Assessments and other pertinent reports.



INPUT

Collection of perspectives from various audiences who are part of the early childhood system including child care professionals, families, and other system partners.



DATA SYNTHESIS

Identifying trends, barriers, gaps, and opportunities by cross-walking findings from a range of data sources and analytic approaches.



Review & Analysis

In the first component of this comprehensive approach, we reviewed and analyzed existing Needs Assessments and other pertinent reports ([see Table A.1](#) in the appendix). We collected a range of reports across the early childhood ecosystem. An initial list was compiled during January and February 2023 and shared with the State Directors Team to ensure that all relevant reports were included. Gathered information was analyzed to identify key themes and trends in three overarching categories: infrastructure of the early childhood ecosystem, the early childhood workforce, and experiences and needs of children and families. We also sought to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic may have created opportunities to build and enhance resilience in the early childhood ecosystem by examining types of supports that helped facilities remain open, or reopen if closed, during the pandemic.



Input

Next, we collected perspectives from diverse ecosystem partners and participants. Rich sources of information included minutes from groups within the formal early childhood governance system and from the Spring 2023 Summit in which representatives from all governance groups discussed their efforts over the past year. Information was also collected through several community engagement efforts happening in support of the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan. Some efforts were explicitly planned as part of the Needs Assessment process but, in many instances, the Needs Assessment Team capitalized on opportunities to gather valuable knowledge from other strategic efforts already in place. Here are a few examples of engagement efforts:

- **Developmental health survey and engagement sessions with families.** In the late Fall of 2022, a total of 1,479 Kansas family members and early childhood professionals participated in a survey about developmental screening and available resources for developmental health. Results informed and guided six virtual family engagement sessions in the Spring of 2023 (five in English, one in Spanish) where parents and caregivers were asked to generate ideas for immediate, actionable solutions to improve developmental health experiences of Kansas families.

- **Engagement sessions with early childhood professionals.** Early childhood professionals provided feedback on professional learning opportunities and pathways for growth and advancement across several engagement sessions in 2022 and 2023. Input gathered across almost 20 feedback sessions with early childhood professionals and members of professional organizations like the Early Childhood Higher-Education Options (ECHO) Consortium, Early Childhood Quality Instructional Partners (EQIP), and the Child Care Provider Coalition of Kansas informed the development of the Career Pathway for Kansas Early Childhood Care and Education Professionals (the Pathway). This information was used to ensure that the Pathway will be accessible and affordable to meet the needs of a diverse early childhood workforce, and improve the state's ability to recruit and retain early childhood professionals. The Professional Development Implementation Team (PDIT) reviewed input and finalized the tool.

In partnership with the Kansas Children's Cabinet, DCF, KDHE, and KSDE, Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO) has been leading the implementation of the Career Pathway since April 2023 and hosted 17 virtual listening sessions during August and September 2023 across the state to inform planning and implementation activities. Input on barriers and needs regarding Career Pathway implementation was gathered from over 46 early childhood professionals in 21 counties across Kansas. Seven of the 17 virtual listening sessions targeted groups that train and support the early childhood workforce. These sessions included professionals from Child Care Aware of Kansas (CCA-KS), trainers and technical assistance providers from KCCTO and Infant Toddler Services Network (ITSN); Workforce Development Advisory Group (WFDAG) members, KDHE child care specialists, and faculty from Kansas community colleges, technical institutes, and 4-year universities. Information from these sessions informed the revision of the Career Pathway Implementation Plan, Comprehensive Workforce Study, and helped to operationalize the Career Pathway and supporting materials.

- **Interviews with child care administrators** who were forced to close child care facilities at least once during the pandemic. Administrators, both those who did and did not reopen their facilities, were interviewed to identify challenges brought on—or made worse—by the pandemic and resources and supports that were instrumental for facilities that reopened.
- **Sensemaking in Kansas.** In summer 2023, 214 stories—experiences of thriving or just surviving—were collected from Kansans via Centiment's (n.d.) network of respondents. Unlike most crowdsourcing platforms, Centiment gives respondents the option to direct their compensation to charities of choice; this promotes honest, thoughtful engagement with survey content, yielding high quality data. Recruitment efforts prioritized people whose annual household incomes were \$35,000 or less, and who had children under age 6 in the household. Collecting data through Centiment was an innovative way of engaging the state's population to learn from families whom other engagement methods may not have reached and to address wide-spread survey fatigue. The 'Prevention Framework' used for this initiative is the result of a collaboration across several states to improve outcomes for children and families by gathering insights into bridges and barriers that families encounter.
- **Young Families' Experiences of Social Connection** was a study supported by the Preschool Development Grant designed to understand the experiences, attitudes, and behaviors of parents of young children as they relate to social connectedness and support. Researchers at KU-CPPR fielded a survey with a sample of 1,062 Kansans using panel data.
- **Statewide community engagement tour led by the Task Force.** Governor Kelly signed Executive Order 23-01 in early 2023, which charged the Task Force with conducting a series of partner "engagement opportunities to elicit feedback on the current early childhood governance structure and better understand the needs of parents, families, [early childhood professionals], and businesses." The community engagement tour took place in June 2023 with public listening sessions in nine locations across Kansas, as well as an online listening session. Over 500 Kansans provided feedback on their experiences navigating the early childhood ecosystem.

Participants were prompted with three questions:

What challenges, gaps, or barriers have you faced navigating the early childhood ecosystem? What are the greatest needs your family and community face?

What services and programs are working well locally? What innovation is occurring in your community that could serve as a model in other communities?

How well is the state providing support to the early childhood needs of your family and community?

KU-CPPR processed notes generated from engagement efforts to inform the work of the Task Force, as well as this needs assessment. A thematic analysis of session notes was conducted by extracting patterns from feedback collected at each location and comparing them across geographic regions. The findings were published in a white paper (KU-CPPR, 2023a).

The graphic below highlights some of these engagement efforts. [Table A.2](#) in the appendix summarizes in more detail the various engagement efforts whose outcomes contributed to the development of this Needs Assessment.

Engagement Event	Participants	Voices
Maternal and Child Health/ Home Visiting Community Readiness Survey	Expectant parents and caregivers of children	580
Governor’s ECTTF Listening Sessions	Community members	500+
Developmental Health Survey	Family members and early childhood professionals	1,500
Young Families’ Experiences of Social Connection Survey	Participants largely represented Kansas demographics; Kansas parents of young children and families residing in rural areas were overrepresented in the sample	1,062
Our Tomorrows – Sensemaking	Low income individuals with annual household incomes \$35,000 or less	214
Child Care Provider Experience Mapping	Child care professionals	400+



Data Synthesis

Third, we synthesized all compiled information, identifying trends, barriers, gaps, and opportunities by cross-walking findings from a range of data sources and analytic approaches. This synthesis led to a summary of Key Findings, which were shared with the Recommendations Panel. Key Findings are presented in the remaining sections of this Needs Assessment report.

Limitations

Despite the range of information incorporated into this Needs Assessment, which included data and reports from state and national entities, the Needs Assessment Team encountered limitations that prevented some of the proposed work and analyses from being carried out. For example, we proposed to survey early childhood professionals about the challenges they encounter in their work, but decided against this to avoid duplication and survey fatigue on professionals as a comprehensive early childhood workforce study was initiated in November 2023 by KCCTO and the Office of Educational Innovation and Evaluation at Kansas State University. We suggested utilizing data from the new Kansas Workforce Registry

to assess needs related to early childhood workforce recruitment, training, and professional development across regions, but were unable to do so because the Workforce Registry is still in development. We also proposed statistical analyses, including multivariate regression analysis, using data from the Distinct Count of Children in Early Care and Education Services project to determine gaps and outcomes at the county/regional level, but individual-level data needed to carry out those analyses were not available. Additionally, our assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on licensed facility closures was limited by low participation in the interview study.



Framework

In each Needs Assessment update, we shared new information and data related to the two Central Messages and eight Key Findings identified in the 2019 Needs Assessment. The central messages from the 2019 Needs Assessment articulated how geography and unmet basic needs created interrelated challenges for children, families, and communities. These central messages remain prominent in the 2024 Needs Assessment.

Central Message 1

Families' experiences are profoundly shaped by where they live across the state and within communities. Geography impacts the availability and accessibility of early care and education services and supports, creating isolation and navigation barriers.

Central Message 2

Too many young Kansas children grow up in families where basic needs are not met. The struggle to meet basic needs, such as housing and health care, prevents families from fully meeting their child's developmental needs.

Key Findings from the 2019 Needs Assessment

Eight Key Findings from the 2019 Needs Assessment characterized how Kansas children, families, communities, and professionals experienced early childhood services and supports. For the 2024 Needs Assessment, we analyzed new data and compared these findings to the 2019 Needs Assessment. Additionally, we used guiding questions, which are presented at the beginning of the next three sections, to ensure that our analysis reflected the goals set forth in the five-year *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan. Together, these served as a framework that guided our approach to develop the 2024 Needs Assessment Findings. As a result, the 2019 Needs Assessment Findings served as a baseline from which we could describe progress, identify ongoing and new challenges, and document remaining gaps here in the 2024 Needs Assessment Findings.



Accessibility Families with young children experience inequitable access to high-quality programs and services across the broader early childhood system



Availability Families with young children experience a gap between the services that are available and their actual needs, disproportionately affecting vulnerable and underserved populations.



Navigation Families must adopt a "connect the dots" approach to navigate services across sectors; disruptors are frequent and common.



Workforce Early childhood workforce needs at both the leadership and direct service levels include preparation, compensation/financial relief, ongoing training and support, and recruitment and retention.



Facilities Needs exist related to the physical conditions and environments of early childhood facilities across the state



Collaboration Early childhood professionals and partners share a desire for collaboration and cooperation, but these efforts are often disconnected and uncoordinated.



Systems Alignment Greater systems alignment is needed to fully realize an efficient and robust early childhood infrastructure.



Bright Spots Efficient, innovative, and responsive efforts are occurring among early childhood system partners in communities throughout the state.

Key Findings from the 2024 Needs Assessment

Coordinated Governance Structure. Collaboration across state agencies and organizations has increased, creating greater efficiency and increased access to services. Inherent limitations remain in a coordinated governance model, including fiscal and regulatory differences across agencies, and a lack of centralized decision-making authority. For families, this means they continue to experience a fragmented system that is often unresponsive to their needs or otherwise inaccessible.

Public-Private Partnerships. Multiple funding streams were blended and braided to support child care needs within the early childhood ecosystem. Responding to differing requirements on various timelines is challenging and requires creative solutions. We need to continue exploring ways to facilitate these partnerships and navigate constraints.

Data-Based Decision-Making. Authorized projects were implemented under the Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust to analyze the impact of early childhood investments using cross-agency data. This work is just beginning; partners express a desire to more flexibly share data to take full analytical advantage of existing data to understand outcomes for families within the ecosystem. Navigating multiple layers of data sharing requirements is a persistent challenge.

Workforce Development. Integrated initiatives are being launched to recruit, retain, and elevate highly qualified early childhood professionals. Despite these efforts, early childhood professionals question how long they can remain in the field because of low wages and lack of benefits.

Affordable Child Care. Statewide strategies helped child care administrators keep their doors open despite workforce shortages, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. For many programs, future sustainability without a long-term funding infrastructure is questionable.

Basic Needs are Fundamental. Kansas implements services and supports to address individual child and family needs, such as parent education, mental health services, and job training. However, many families cannot thrive because they cannot access the basics, such as housing, health care, transportation, employment, and livable wages.

When Kansas families lack concrete supports and social connections, their children may miss critical opportunities to thrive and grow to their full potential. Children and families can benefit from a seamless early childhood ecosystem that serves as the foundation for thriving and sustainable futures. This moment requires us to rethink how services are designed and delivered from multiple lenses: **access, family needs and preferences, and ease of navigation, to name a few.**



Important Accomplishments

The *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan goals described the infrastructure needed to achieve a vision for children and families in Kansas. Below are important accomplishments that mark progress toward addressing needs identified in the Kansas early childhood ecosystem, experienced by the early childhood workforce, and endured by Kansas children and families.

➤ **Early Childhood Ecosystem**

Improved collaboration across state agencies through state directors team; formation/enhancement of collaborative networks at several intersections of the ecosystem; pandemic relief and recovery efforts.

➤ **Early Childhood Workforce**

Actions aimed at workforce development to unify and professionalize the workforce, such as creating a Workforce Registry, building a Career Pathway, and adopting new Core Competencies.

➤ **Children and Families**

Improved navigation for families and greater access to key services and supports, such as 1-800-CHILDREN centralized access point, developmental screenings, and statewide expansion of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

Looking ahead, in the [Ecosystem Section](#), we describe successes and challenges associated with collaboration and alignment, connecting the dots for families, professionals, and communities, and integrating data across the early childhood ecosystem. In the [Workforce Section](#), we turn our attention to the early childhood workforce within this ecosystem, focusing on how and where significant resources are needed to recruit and retain highly qualified professionals. In the [Children and Families Section](#), we detail experiences of children and families across the state, describe their needs, and present data on gaps in services and supports that impact their ability to thrive. And finally in the [Opportunities and Next Steps Section](#), we share a gap analysis and identify opportunities to address persistent needs across the Kansas early childhood ecosystem. Each of the following sections includes a data snapshot of accomplishments and gaps, narrative responses to guiding questions, and recommendations that correspond with each finding.



The Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem

Introduction and Guiding Questions

In April 2020, Kansas began implementing the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan to address needs identified through extensive community and partner engagement. Many strategies outlined in the plan focus on collaboration between state agencies and community partners to coordinate services so that all families and professionals in the early childhood ecosystem can access supports when they need them. In the following section, we highlight accomplishments and describe challenges that persist despite notable progress toward the state's goals for a fully aligned early childhood ecosystem. The following questions guided this section of the Needs Assessment:

How have relationships among state agencies and organizations influenced policy alignment and improved ecosystem efficiency? What challenges or needs persist?

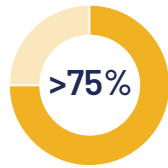
How are families and professionals connected to the right services at the right time? What is needed to maximize these efforts?

How are data shared across agencies and used to better understand the impact of early childhood investments? What are the next steps for fully implementing the Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust?

Ecosystem Accomplishments

EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION TASK FORCE

416
survey
participants



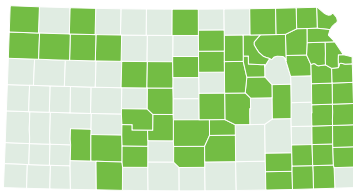
A majority of participants indicated that **Kansas is heading in the right direction**

KU-CPPR, 2023a

COMMUNITIES IN ACTION WORKSHOPS CCA-KS & DCF

26 community
coalitions

Coalitions representing **57 counties** have developed community-driven plans to address child care. Many were well-positioned to apply for and effectively use Child Care Capacity Building Grants.



Child Care Capacity Building Grants
in the amount of

\$2,360,935

were received by **66 child care coalitions** to support local-level planning and implementation efforts to provide affordable, high-quality child care.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

In 2022-2023, **265 of 286 Kansas school districts** operated approved **Preschool-Aged At-Risk programs** to serve eligible children. *Kansas State Department of Education, 2023b*



2022-2023

COMMUNITY FUNDING

Kansas state agencies and organizations collaborated to distribute funding to communities through COVID-19 relief allocations, PDG B-5 Quality Subgrants, and the Child Care Capacity Accelerator program.

\$400 million+

in COVID-19 relief funds were distributed to support families, child care professionals and programs, and to make general ecosystem improvements.



\$58,817,713

*Community match for child care
(specifically for Child Care Capacity Accelerator projects)*

THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

Throughout Kansas, for every new dollar invested in child care professionals, other professionals earn an additional \$0.50-\$0.51.

Green, 2021

**Child care
professionals
earnings**

**Other
professionals
earnings**



Ecosystem Gaps

CHILD CARE DEFICITS IN KANSAS

Child care has more expenditures than revenue.

Annual average deficits:



\$255,130,586
within the Kansas child care system

\$92,600

per medium center-based
programs serving ~ 70 children

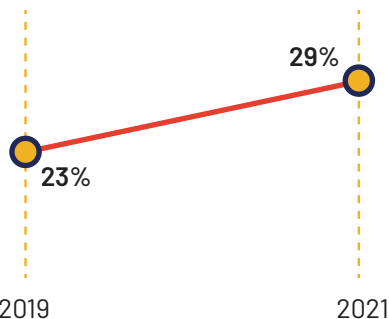


\$3,372
per child served

KU-CPPR, 2022c

EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

Percentage of children exiting Part C services
without Part B eligibility determinations



No eligibility determination process was implemented for 28.7% of children who exited Part C early intervention services, therefore their eligibility for Part B early childhood special education services was unknown. This percentage is even higher than the 22.9% of children whose eligibility was unknown during the same transition point two years prior.

KU-CPPR, 2019, 2022

CHILD CARE ECONOMIC EFFECTS

The estimated **long-term economic impact of insufficient child care capacity** in Kansas is a

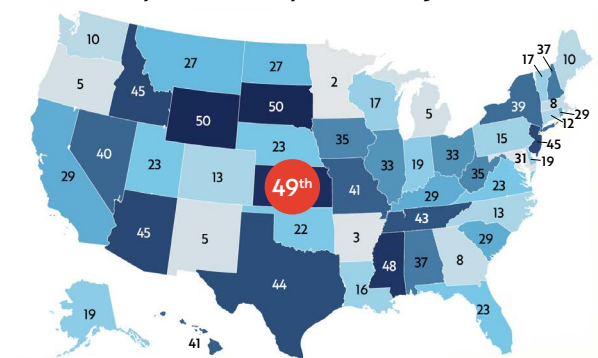
\$2.2 billion to \$3.3 billion loss



Bipartisan Policy Center, 2021

EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS INTEGRATION

Kansas ranks **49th**
for effective and efficient
early childhood systems integration.



Walsh et al., 2023

PRENATAL & POSTPARTUM SUPPORT

Prenatal and postpartum support
needs to improve in Kansas.



Statewide,
families do not receive paid family leave time.

There are **no statewide group prenatal care or doula programs.**



PN3, 2023

Ecosystem Summary Findings

Findings related to the Kansas early childhood ecosystem were developed through in-depth review of existing data and relevant reports (see [Introduction Section](#)), collection of perspectives from across the ecosystem, and data synthesis of these important, yet distinct insights.

COORDINATED GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

✓ **Collaboration across state agencies and organizations has increased, creating greater efficiency and improved access to services.**

! Inherent limitations remain in a coordinated governance model, including fiscal and regulatory differences across agencies, and a lack of centralized decision-making authority. For families, this means they continue to experience a fragmented system that is often unresponsive to their needs or otherwise inaccessible.



DATA-BASED DECISION-MAKING

✓ **Authorized projects were implemented under the Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust to analyze the impact of early childhood investments using cross-agency data. This work is just beginning; partners express a desire to more flexibly share data to take full analytical advantage of existing data to understand outcomes for families within the ecosystem.**

! Navigating multiple layers of data sharing requirements is a persistent challenge.



PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

✓ **Multiple funding streams were blended and braided to support child care needs within the early childhood ecosystem.**

! Responding to differing requirements on various timelines is challenging and requires creative solutions. We need to continue exploring ways to facilitate these partnerships and navigating constraints.



The Current Early Childhood Ecosystem in Kansas

In January 2019, Kansas demonstrated a need and strong desire to support young children and their families and was awarded an initial Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) planning grant, federally funded through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The PDG B-5 grant program supports state efforts to create an aligned and coordinated early childhood ecosystem. The initial PDG B-5 grant in Kansas resulted in the development and publication of a comprehensive, statewide Needs Assessment of the early childhood ecosystem and young children and their families who this ecosystem supports. The 2019 Needs Assessment highlighted that children and families across Kansas have inconsistent access to early childhood services and emphasized that many Kansas families struggle to meet their basic needs. These findings led to the development of the five-year *All in for Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan to improve our early childhood ecosystem.

We learned from the 2019 Needs Assessment that “greater systems alignment is needed to fully realize an efficient and robust early childhood infrastructure” (p. 7). In response to this identified need, the State Directors Team made important strides toward a fully integrated early childhood ecosystem by strengthening the existing governance structure, outlined in the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan. In addition, the Kansas Children’s Cabinet and Trust Fund (Kansas Children’s Cabinet) introduced a revised Blueprint for Early Childhood to guide state and local decision-making across the ecosystem in ways that promote healthy development, strong families, and early learning. These three “building blocks” are the foundation for collaborative partnerships across all sectors of the early childhood ecosystem, with multiple champions working together to provide high-quality, accessible, and affordable services for children and families.

Blueprint for Early Childhood *Foundational Building Blocks*



Healthy Development

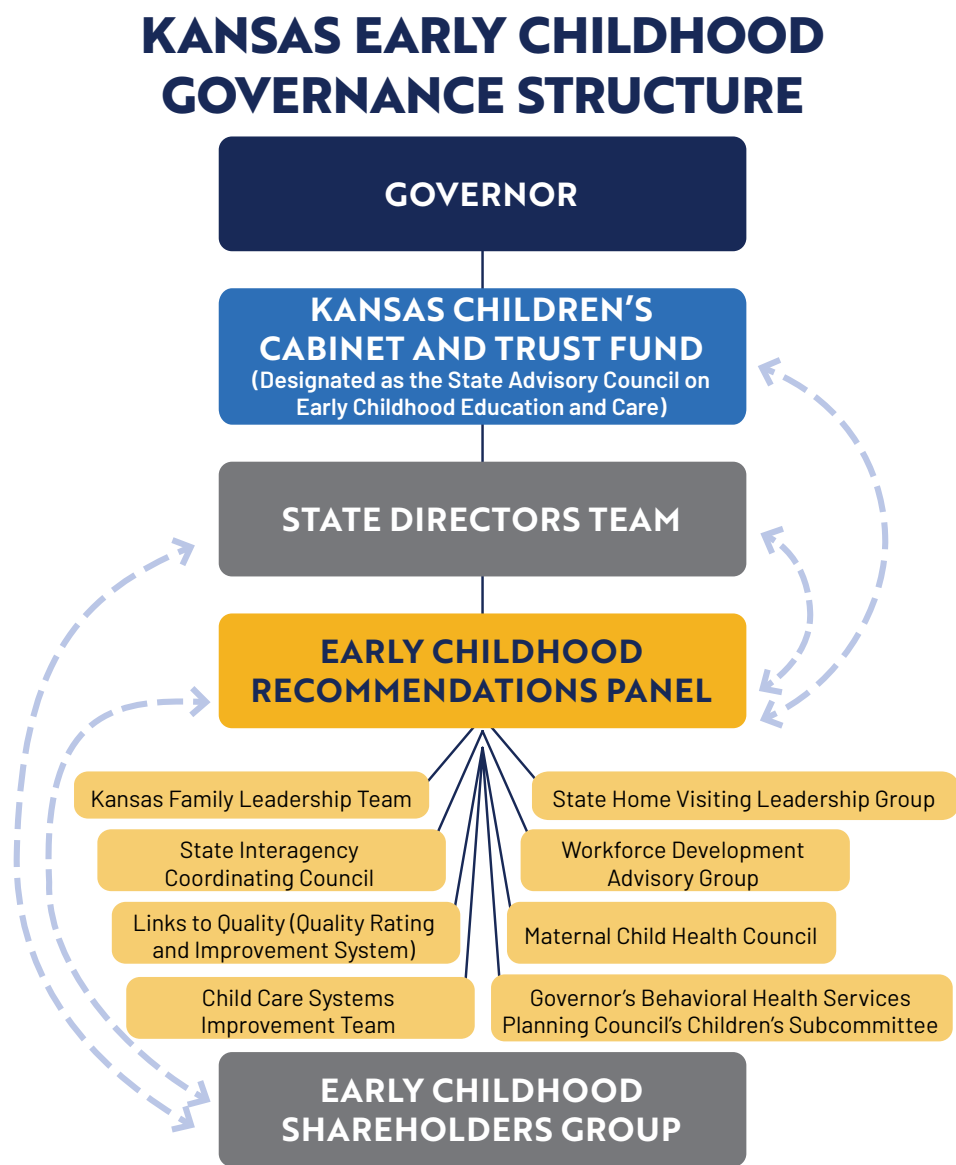


Strong Families



Early Learning

The governance structure calls for agency collaboration through two central touchpoints: the Kansas Children’s Cabinet, which meets every two months, and State Directors Team, which meets every two weeks. Beyond these collaborative meetings, the Kansas Children’s Cabinet and State Directors Team continuously coordinate with groups and councils representing all sectors of the Kansas early childhood ecosystem. For example, the State Directors Team oversees core programs within the ecosystem including early intervention, home visiting, child care, preschool, prenatal and maternal health, and behavioral health, among others.



The Early Childhood Recommendations Panel is also an important component of the governance structure and was designated as the working group of the Early Childhood Advisory Council by Executive Order (Kansas Governor [Executive Order 20-02](#)). The Panel includes broad representation across the early childhood ecosystem, including families, program representatives, advocates, educators, researchers, and state agency staff (Kansas [Children's Cabinet](#), n.d.). The Panel meets monthly to examine proposals for policy and systems change from other bodies in the governance structure, elevating vetted proposals to the State Directors Team and the Kansas Children’s Cabinet. To date, three recommendations on Kindergarten Transitions, State and Local Interagency Coordinating Councils Collaboration Strategies, and Child Care Retention Bonuses have been approved by the Early Childhood Advisory Council.

In April 2020, Kansas was awarded a three-year PDG B-5 renewal grant to implement the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan. Publication of the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan and the renewal grant award coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly impacted Kansas children and families, the early childhood workforce, and communities. Though *All In For Kansas Kids* was developed to address long-term needs by ensuring a sustainable and high-quality early childhood ecosystem, this plan became essential for pandemic-era decision-making by informing responses to immediate early childhood ecosystem needs that arose during the public health crisis and the PDG B-5 renewal grant funding made implementation possible.

Since the pandemic onset, PDG B-5 funding has supported various system-building efforts across the state. This includes over \$8.7 million in subgrants used to enhance access to child care, engage families and ensure family knowledge and choice, promote kindergarten readiness, and improve the quality of early childhood services. Resources were intentionally provided to rural communities because they often encounter unique barriers to accessing services and supports. These funds also supported workforce development, purchase of classroom resources, development and enhancement of curriculum, parent training/support, enhancement of inclusion, and developing system capacity.

Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The early childhood ecosystem was put to the test during the COVID-19 pandemic. With a coordinated governance structure strengthened by the [PDG B-5 grant](#), Kansas was well positioned to respond to pandemic conditions impacting the early childhood ecosystem. Coordination and quick action by the State Directors Team, Child Care Aware of Kansas (CCA-KS), the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO), and others led to \$300 million in relief funds awarded to over 12,000 child care professionals over the course of the pandemic.

"Getting grant monies helped a lot. We honestly did not have enough money to pay the bills when we only had four kids [in our child care program]. We couldn't make ends meet. There were also resources for hand sanitizer, face masks, gloves, and cleaning supplies. They set up a drive-through where we could pick up supplies. That was an absolute blessing."

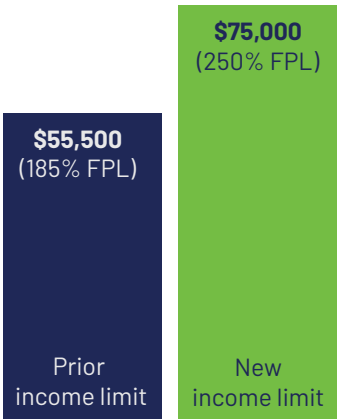
Child care administrator

The [Kansas Hero Relief Child Care Assistance Program](#) launched March 24, 2020 to offset child care costs for families, many of which had multiple children in child care. Notable impacts were documented by the number of households receiving Child Care Assistance over the course of the pandemic. Households receiving assistance significantly decreased in the month following the pandemic emergency declaration, from 5,699 households in March 2020 to 4,372 households in April 2020, but increased to pre-pandemic levels after only three months of Hero Relief program's launch with 6,290 households enrolled. Monthly enrollment remained above 6,000 households for all of FY 2021 (KU-CPPR, 2022a) and increased to a monthly average of 7,324 households by FY 2023 (DCF, 2023a). The relatively quick rebound to pre-pandemic enrollment levels for Child Care Assistance, followed by the prolonged increase beyond pre-pandemic enrollment levels, were made possible because the Hero Relief Program extended eligibility.

From March 2020 through September 2022, eligibility for Child Care Assistance was expanded under the Hero Relief Program. This expansion extended coverage to any Kansas worker with an income at or below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), which is \$75,000 annual income for a family of four, and to essential workers, and reduced family share deduction amounts from the total benefit ([EES Policy No. 20-08-08](#)). Additionally, a revision to this policy in July 2021 extended the program's eligibility period from six to twelve months ([EES Policy No. 21-06-04](#)). In short, these expansions to Child Care Assistance provided more households with increased Child Care Assistance for a longer duration.

The temporary Hero Relief Program was administered by DCF and supported by the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) from the U. S. Department of Education and the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). DCF stopped taking applications for assistance under the Hero Relief Program on October 1, 2022, and applications received after that date become subject to guidelines of the regular Child Care Assistance Program ([EES Policy No. 22-08-02](#)). However, DCF made some of the pandemic changes permanent, including decreasing the required family share deduction (families have just a 3% responsibility to pay charges not covered by the Child Care Assistance Program) and increasing income limits from 185% to 250% FPL, which is an adjustment from a maximum annual income of \$55,500 for a family of four up to \$75,000.

Eligibility income limits increased for a family of four



Extending eligibility criteria for Child Care Assistance made this support available to more families, with almost 2,000 families earning between 185% and 250% FPL who became eligible, and over one-quarter of Kansas families who received assistance (DCF, 2023c). In other words, thousands more families have been able to access financial support for monthly child care costs, which were otherwise a significant cost burden for families who earned slightly more than the previous income threshold for Child Care Assistance eligibility.

While efforts to distribute federal relief and Child Care Assistance amidst the pandemic fast-tracked collaboration across the ecosystem to support children and families, underlying early childhood ecosystem inefficiencies were compounded by unprecedented operational challenges during the pandemic. These

layered challenges rippled throughout the early childhood ecosystem, ultimately impacting child care programs and children and families whom they serve. To illustrate, local health department leaders who resigned, retired, or were asked to resign between April 2020 and August 2021 shared that their top challenges were political divisiveness, lack of support from county leadership, lack of support and unrealistic expectations from the public, extreme work hours with high demands, and poor communication across public health infrastructure (Cain et al., 2022).

Although reasons for the departure of former local leaders were magnified by the pandemic, Kansas state agencies commonly experienced staffing turnover due to retirement or burnout, such as KDHE with roughly 40% of staff ages 50 and above and nearly 24% of total staff considering leaving the agency within a year (e.g., KDHE & KU-CPPR, 2021). Maternal and Child Health (MCH) programs administered by KDHE experienced a decrease of 32% in the number of full-time equivalent staff between 2020 and 2023 (KU-CPPR, 2023c). Fewer seasoned state agency leaders and staff resulted in loss of procedural and historical knowledge within state agencies and communication barriers between state agencies, in turn passing the burden of navigating this magnified fragmentation onto child care administrators. Turnover, regardless of the purpose, disrupts collaborative work, not only because of the loss of institutional knowledge and skills, but also because new relationships must be built from scratch.

“Turnover was harder because of the extra stresses associated with the pandemic. All of us had to do things we never envisioned being part of our job. Lately we’ve had new people coming on at a fast rate, and it has been a challenge to ensure we’re bringing them to the table.”
Agency representative

Through pandemic response efforts to provide stability for children, families, and professionals during unprecedented times, focus on sustainable child care emphasized the need for an integrated early childhood ecosystem in which related services and supports can be efficiently and effectively streamlined.

Findings

The early childhood ecosystem includes every program, service, resource, information system, and partnership needed to identify and support the needs of Kansas children, their families, communities, and the early childhood workforce. Efforts to strengthen this vital ecosystem must consider interdependencies, complexities, and nuances among multiple systems and partners. The following analysis presents our state's recent successes and continued challenges around collaboration and alignment, tools and practices, and integrating data within the Kansas early childhood ecosystem.

Collaboration and Alignment

In 2019, the Governor declared early childhood a top priority for the state. Since then, we have seen this priority galvanize multiple partners from different sectors to play active roles in systems transformation. At the heart of this work is an increasing desire to leverage state-level resources to amplify ingenuity, insights, and trusted relationships of early childhood partners at the local level. This harmony of state and local efforts is a balancing act that requires awareness of needs, ability to quickly adapt, and commitment to support the right mix of solutions—solutions that truly center the needs of young children, their families, and professionals who serve them. Operations within the governance structure demonstrate increased collaboration and alignment across a fragmented early childhood ecosystem in Kansas, evidenced by strengthening relationships among state agencies, improving alignment through coordinated intakes and referrals, and emphasizing public-private partnerships to adequately fund child care and related services.

Stronger Collaborative Relationships Across the Early Childhood Ecosystem

In Kansas statute ([K.S.A. 38-1901](#)), the Kansas Children's Cabinet is charged with assisting the Governor in developing and implementing a coordinated, comprehensive delivery system to serve children and families. The Kansas Children's Cabinet has increasingly embraced this role and is recognized as a leader, facilitator, and strategist by policy-makers, community leaders, and current state agency partners. However, the Kansas Children's Cabinet must rely on collaborative relationships to move systems-level work forward.

One way that early childhood ecosystem members are becoming more collaborative is by learning more about each other's unique roles and efforts through the Kansas Early Childhood Governance Summit (*All In For Kansas Kids*, 2023), an annual convening of state agencies, coalitions, workgroups, and community partners.

The second annual Governance Summit was held in 2023, bringing thirteen diverse groups together to share their work and discuss alignment with the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan. Similarly, regular meetings of these groups, such as monthly convenings of the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel, contribute to greater understanding, collaboration, and progress.

Kansas Early Childhood Governance Summit Participants

- [Early Childhood Recommendations Panel](#)
- [Child Care Systems Improvement Team](#)
- [Family Advisory Council](#)
- [Family First Statewide Interagency and Community Advisory Board](#)
- [Family Leadership Team](#)
- [Governor's Behavioral Health Services Planning Council's Children's Subcommittee](#)
- [Home Visiting Leadership Group](#)
- [Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust Governance Board](#)
- [Kansas Early Learning Standards](#)
- [Maternal Child Health Council](#)
- [Quality Recognition and Improvement System Advisory Board](#)
- [State Interagency Coordinating Council](#)
- [Workforce Development Advisory Group](#)

To further enhance collaboration and alignment, key early childhood state agencies participated in the work of the Early Childhood Transition Task Force (Task Force) assembled by the Governor in January 2023 through Executive Order 23-01. Task Force membership included leaders from KDHE, DCF, the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Department of Commerce. The Task Force, coordinated by the [Hunt Institute](#), was charged with bringing forth recommendations in December 2023 to "creat[e] a framework for a model single-agency governance structure for early childhood programming that consolidates initiatives and funding under the leadership of a new cabinet-level position" ([Executive Order 23-01](#)). Recognizing the challenge of coordinated decision-making in a highly decentralized structure, Task Force members were interested to learn about possible ways forward. Throughout 2023, the Task Force analyzed the current system and fiscal streams in Kansas, researched lessons learned from other states, and conducted statewide listening sessions. The Task Force assembled substantial materials about the state's current early childhood ecosystem and related programs, as well as progress on the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan to inform their work.

In addition to cross-agency collaboration, collaboration between state and local leadership groups is also important to consider because these groups bring together individuals with unique backgrounds, skillsets, expertise, and priorities, which could help or hinder systems alignment efforts. Therefore, in response to the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan, the collaboration was examined among the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel and Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICCs) using two tools: the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory (Mattessich, 2018), which evaluates six domains—communication, environment, membership, process, purpose, resources, and the Levels of Collaboration Scale (Frey et al., 2006), which measures five areas—networking, cooperation, coordination, coalition, and collaboration. The quality of state-level collaboration among Panel members has improved according to the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory (KSDE, 2023e). Data analysis showed enhanced Panel member perceptions about working in a positive social and political environment conducive to change ("Environment" score improved from 3.87 to 4.05), which supports collaborative efforts toward shared goals. Additionally, Panel members' perceptions about having membership representation conducive to make progress improved from 3.76 to 4.17. For LICCs, conditions and perceptions of collaboration

remained somewhat positive with an average score around 4 and did not substantially change from 2019 to 2023 (KSDE, 2023e). However, slight improvements were noted for mutual respect and trust amongst LICC members, which increased from 4.09 to 4.15, and adequate resources available to local partners to support shared efforts, which grew from 3.57 to 3.86.

Membership representation is another aspect of collaboration. In early 2023, a dozen LICCs participated in a network analysis, replicating a study completed in 2019 as part of a statewide needs assessment of the Kansas Infant-Toddler Program (now the Kansas Early Childhood Development Services Program). The network analysis revealed that membership in LICCs had grown from an average of 18 members in 2019 to 25 members in 2023 (KSDE, 2023e). On average, networks in 2023 had greater representation from the business sector and more representation of higher education and behavioral health service professionals. While there is greater representation from business and early childhood professional sectors, family representation still must be improved within these councils and all other collaborative groups that span from local to state levels.

Additional strategies, such as those recommended by the [Early Childhood Recommendations Panel](#) (2022), can be implemented by LICCs and the SICC to broaden participation and membership. Broadening participation and membership in state- and local-level decision-making is necessary to ensure that the early childhood ecosystem is inclusive of, and responsive to, all partners and their perspectives. For example, seeking funding to compensate members for their time, travel, and/or child care costs can support efforts to diversify membership, which will make for more responsive and representative leadership and decision-making groups within the early childhood ecosystem. Unified, collaborative efforts at state and local levels are underway to better connect children, families, and professionals to relevant supports within their communities. Following the Panel's Recommendations can facilitate greater progress toward goals put forward in the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan.

"Getting everyone in the same room does not guarantee efficiency or collaboration. It's deeper than that.
Early childhood professional
(KU-CPPR, 2023a)

Although collaboration and alignment within the Kansas early childhood ecosystem have improved as a result of the strengthened governance structure and decision-making guidance put forward in the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan and Blueprint for Early Childhood, there are substantial limitations to this coordinated model. Regular meetings held by the Kansas Children’s Cabinet and State Directors Team serve as central touchpoints to facilitate collaboration across the Kansas early childhood ecosystem. However, this increased collaboration may be inadvertently hampered by constraints within each agency.

The structural constraints are illustrated by the fiscal maps presented in the final report of the Early Childhood Transition Task Force [Hunt Institute, 2023b], reproduced in [Figures 1, 2, and 3](#). Child care oversight and assistance are delivered through three programs, funded by four different sources and administered by two different agencies. There are five home visiting programs, administered by three different agencies, and supported by five different funding streams. State preschool programs, while all administered by KSDE, are funded by three different funding streams, two of which are allocated through DCF and the Children’s Cabinet.

Figure 1. Child Care Fiscal Map

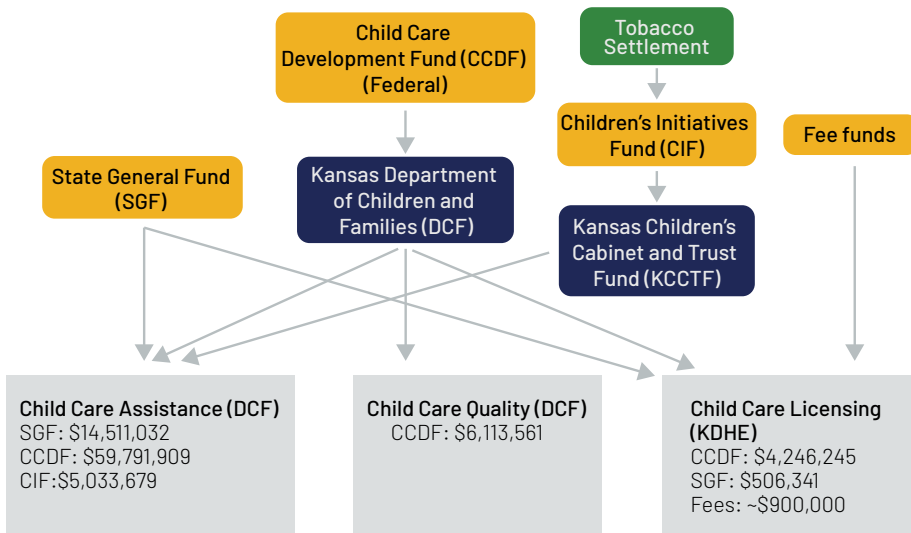


Figure 2. Home Visiting Fiscal Map

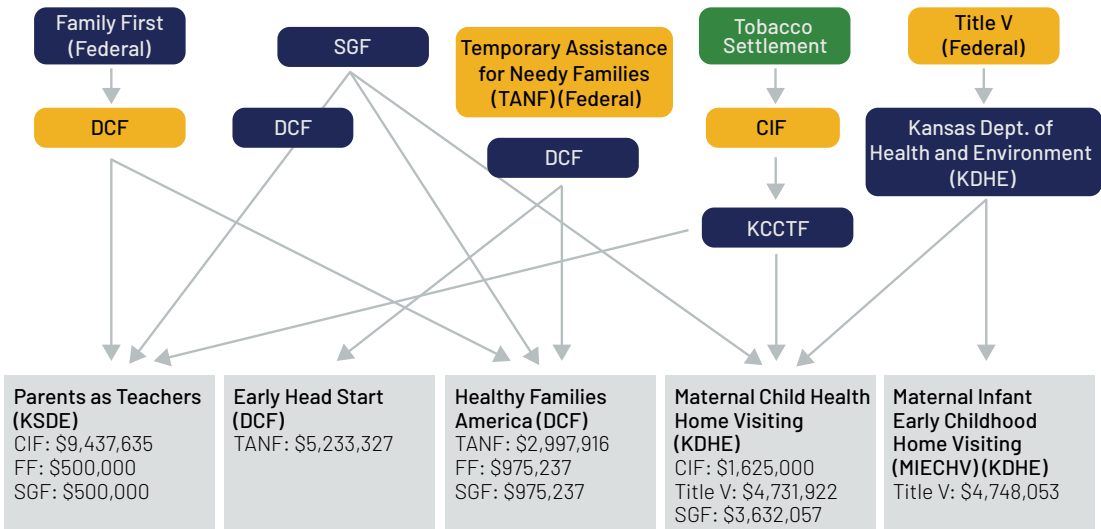
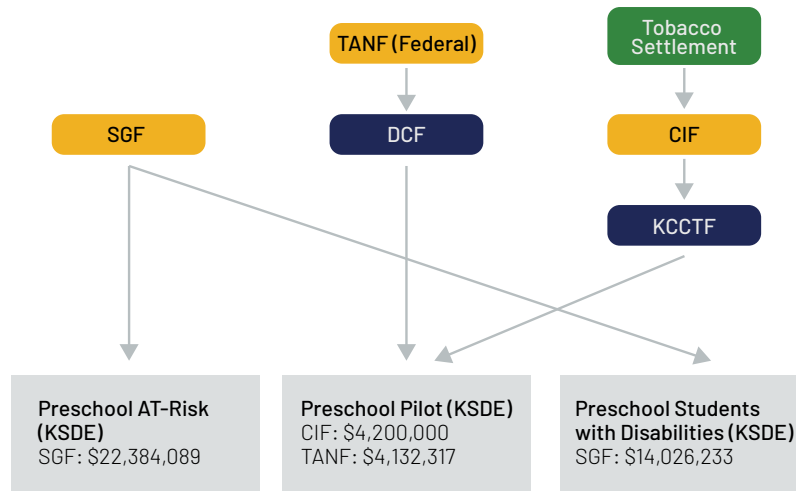


Figure 3. Preschool Fiscal Map



These differences create a patchwork of distinct silos, rather than facilitating transparency and reciprocity that allows for efficient and effective ecosystem collaboration and alignment. Despite efforts, the current fragmented early childhood ecosystem of related, yet separate agencies cannot be fully integrated for efficiency and effectiveness.

Table 1. KSDE Programs

Program	Service type	Funding	Numbers served
Parents as Teachers	Home Visiting	\$9,437,635 (CIF)	2021-22: 8,128 (children), 6,114 (families)
Preschool Aged At-Risk	Preschool	\$22,384,089 (SGF)	2021-22: 9,513 (children)
Kansas Preschool Pilot	Preschool	\$4,200,000 (CIF) \$4,132,317 (TANF)	2021-22: 4,963 (children)
State Enrollment Aid for Preschool Students with Disabilities	Preschool	\$14,026,233 (SGF)	2021-22: 5,961 (children)
State and Local Interagency Coordinating Councils	Governance	\$43,000 (IDEA Part C) \$7,000 (CCDF)	n/a
Ages and Stages Questionnaire	Developmental Screening	\$165,000 (SGF)	2022: 88,104
Child and Adult Care Food Program	Food assistance	\$29,371,945 (CNP-Federal USDA)	2022: 3,870,480 breakfast; 876,292 snacks; 4,090,361 lunch; 5,020,735 snacks

Note: Original sources did not specify whether numbers served were reported in federal or state fiscal years.

Table 2. Kansas Children’s Cabinet Programs

Program	Service type	Funding	Numbers served
Early Childhood Block Grant	Care and Education	\$21,017,930 (CIF)	FY22: 6,719 (children), 5,968 (families)
Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library of Kansas	Early Literacy	\$1,500,000 (CIF)	Fall 2023: Over 69,000
Early Childhood Infrastructure	System Building	\$1,400,733 (CIF)	n/a
Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention	Prevention	\$1,453,531 (Federal Grant)	2022: 1,600 (children), 700 (caregivers)
Child Care Capacity Accelerator Grants	Care and Education	\$55,018,294 (ARPA Discretionary, CCDF Discretionary, PDG Grant, and Private Funds)	n/a (projected to create 5,655 slots)
Preschool Development Implementation Grant Birth-5	Care and Education	\$26,829,000 (Federal Grant)	n/a
Preschool Development Planning Grant Birth-5	Care and Education	\$4,000,000 (Federal Grant)	n/a
Workforce Registry	Workforce/System Building	\$3,000,000 (CCDF Discretionary)	n/a
Early Childhood Integrated Data System	System Building	\$800,000 (TANF)	n/a

Note: Original sources did not specify whether numbers served were reported in federal or state fiscal years.

Table 3. DCF Programs

Program	Service type	Funding	Numbers served
Child Care Assistance	Care and Education	\$79,336,620 (CCDF, SGF)	Feb. 2023: 12,273 (children)
Child Care Quality	Care and Education	\$4,954,241 (CCDF) (Additional funds transferred to KDHE)	Various (Based in individual service)
Healthy Families America	Home Visiting	\$2,997,916 (TANF)	FY22: 2,014 (families)
Head Start Collaboration Office	Coordination and Collaboration Between Head Start and the Broader State System	\$102,551 (Federal Grant) \$34,184 (SGF)	7,758 (children), 6,865 (families)*
Kansas Early Head Start Child Care Partnership and Kansas Early Head Start Home Visitation	Child Care and Home Visiting	\$5,233,327 (TANF) \$7,506,797 (CCDF)	563 (children participating in Home Visiting), 387 (children participating in Child Care)
Parent Skill-Building (Families First Prevention Services Act)-Parents as Teachers	Home Visiting and Parent Education	\$1,000,000 (All Funds)	2022: 205 referrals
Parent Skill-Building (Families First Prevention Services Act)-Healthy Families America	Home Visiting	\$795,613 (All Funds)	2023: 120 (estimated families)
Parent Skill-Building (Families First Prevention Services Act)-Healthy Families America-2	Home Visiting	\$395,475 (All Funds)	2023: 195 (estimated families)
Family Preservation	Prevention	Various	2023: 1,500 (estimated families)

* These figures reflect the number of children and families served by community-based Head Start grantees. The Head Start Collaboration Office does not provide direct services.

Note: Original sources did not specify whether numbers served were reported in federal or state fiscal years.

Table 4. KDHE Programs

Program	Service type	Funding	Numbers served
Child Care Licensing and Early Youth Care Programs	Care and Education	\$4,246,254 (CCDF, SGF, Fees)	Total Licensed Capacity: 142,807 (8/2023)
Kansas Early Childhood Developmental Services (Part C)	Early Intervention	\$16,200,000 (SGF, CIF, Federal)	11,000 (children)
Newborn Hearing Screening Program	Screening	\$350,000 (HRSA, CDC)	36,207 (children)
Critical Congenital Heart Defect Program	Screening	Fee Funded	36,207 (children)
Birth Defects Program	Screening	Fee Funded	680 (children)
Newborn Screening Metabolic Follow-Up Program	Screening	Fee Funded	3,858 (children)
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	Nutrition	\$61,025,252 (Federal and Private)	80,413 (total)
Title V	Family and Child Health	\$12,055,984 (Federal, State)	unknown
Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Home Visiting/ Universal Home Visiting	Home Visiting	\$1,650,000 (State)	2,047 (women)
Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)	Home Visiting	\$4,748,053 (Federal and State Match)	631 (children), 566 (caregivers)
Maternal Community Health Worker Pilot Project	Workforce	\$696,425 (Grants)	304 (families)
Kansas Special Health Care Needs Program	Family and Child Health	\$642,089 (Federal MCH Grant)	281 (children)
Bridges	Family and Child Health	\$50,000 (PDG)	30 (clients)
Holistic Care Coordination	Family and Child Health	\$57,600 (Federal MCH Grant)	224 (clients)
Primary Care Provider Care Coordination Expansion Project	Family and Child Health	PDG Funded	3 (providers)
Supporting You	Parent Education	\$45,000 (Federal MCH Grant)	100 (participants)
Help Me Grow	Family and Child Health	\$700,000 (state funds)	unknown
School Based Health Center Program	Family and Child Health	\$3,621,527 (Federal)	unknown
CARE Program	Family and Child Health	\$757,000 (SGF)	n/a
Kansas Perinatal Community Collaborative	Family and Child Health	Federal MCH Grant	543 (individuals)

Better Alignment Through Shared Referral Systems

Intake and referral systems facilitate children's and families' timely access to available early childhood services and supports for which they may be eligible. Within local communities, the Integrated Referral and Intake System (IRIS) is a web-based communication tool that facilitates the referral process, which can be customized to include cross-sector partners within local communities. IRIS provides an easy-to-use system that supports transparent communication, data-driven assessment of the effectiveness of IRIS and partner accountability, and the technology to connect partners regardless of their organizational data systems. Participating communities can access the real-time IRIS tool to gauge individual provider and program capacity and close referral loops. Communities can customize referral forms to meet local needs. Then, partners can track each independent referral for families in a community and can clearly identify where a family is in the process with another partner. IRIS also allows an organization to visibly display their capacity to receive referrals, allowing a community to self-assess which organizations are consistently "full," where the most referrals are going, which organizations effectively "close the loop," and how many referrals are successfully completed for families.

The reach of IRIS has continued to grow in Kansas, now serving 32 counties, nearly double the counties served in 2019. Additional vision-driven networks designed to address locally identified needs have launched, including a regional network established to coordinate and scale developmental health promotion activities in northwest Kansas. Recognizing that collaboration to serve families often crosses county and state lines, IRIS Champions in two geographic clusters relaunched as unified regional networks. These mergers reflect the natural inter-connectedness of these communities, resulting in more cohesive networks of partners and increased service diversity available to families.

Collaboration across key state entities has facilitated engagement of crucial referral hubs in each network. For example, Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) Programs in each network serve as a key entry point for services and reliable connector to resources that benefit the whole family. In another example, addressing perceived barriers to IRIS adoption with regional DCF leadership resulted in DCF Child Protective Service units engaging with local networks where they could connect families with early intervention, home visiting, and parent-skill building resources.

The number of partners involved in the Kansas IRIS networks has also nearly doubled since 2019, from 302 to 581 organizations. Each partner operates within an IRIS sector, which includes aging care, behavioral health, concrete supports, developmental disabilities, early childhood, education, family support, maternal and child health, other health services, and resource navigation. Engagement has increased among previously underrepresented sectors such as health services and behavioral health. Gaining buy-in from health providers and services such as safety net clinics, preventative cancer screening services, and non-clinical birth coaches, along with the development of standardized behavioral health referrals for families with school-aged children, allows for connections to a comprehensive range of services. All networks continue to diversify types of family support services as represented by new partnerships with preventative legal services, infant-death bereavement programs, and virtual parent support groups. Community-level innovations, such as IRIS, help families navigate the early childhood ecosystem by facilitating connections between families and potential services, supports, and resources that may be most relevant to them.

Public-Private Partnerships for Child Care

The importance of public-private partnerships is emphasized across the Blueprint for Early Childhood and *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan. Structured and sustained public-private partnerships offer a path to ensure sustainable, high-quality care for children and families. Such partnerships can be seeded with relatively low levels of public investment and provide the ability to pivot to address changing circumstances and move at the pace communities need.

As starkly revealed across the nation during the pandemic, child care is in critical need of more payers into the system—both public and private. In Kansas, child care is paid for primarily from two sources: out-of-pocket by families and, for families who are eligible, Child Care Assistance funded through the federal Child Care and Development Fund (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2016). While the number of Kansas children whose families use Child Care Assistance has gradually increased over the past few years (as noted above), gaps persist between the current needs and available resources—public or private—to cover the cost of care.

If Kansas families and the early childhood workforce continue to bear the brunt of rising child care costs—

in both receiving and providing care—the state will face long-term implications in its larger economy and workforce. Child care spans multiple sectors and interests. Parents are not the only ones who depend on reliable care; employers and communities in which they are located benefit from sufficient child care options. Our state cannot experience economic growth unless the Kansas workforce of today has access to safe, reliable child care for their children. Our children are the Kansas workforce of tomorrow, so it is critical that we devote resources to provide high-quality care that is focused on early learning and healthy development, especially in the first three years, to prepare our children to be thriving adults. Dedicated caregivers across Kansas provide essential support for young children and their families, while simultaneously contributing to our state’s overall productivity and economic stability.

We all will benefit from transformative improvements to the system, including moving to a multi-payer model to fully cover the true cost of high-quality care. In recognition of this, the Task Force published their Interim Report on July

1, 2023, which called for more public-private partnerships to increase the availability and accessibility of child care and establish child care as an essential part of community infrastructure (Hunt Institute, 2023c).

Companies investing in on-site child care can increase both employee retention and morale while reducing pressure on community-based child care programs. Expanding public-private partnerships in communities across Kansas can help establish alternate funding streams, provide supplies and technological support to child care administrators and professionals, and form stronger connections between educational institutions and child care centers. Nationally, some of the most innovative and tractable solutions to expanding child care access include employers in the equation. Under the [Michigan Tri-Share Program](#), for example, child care costs are split evenly between families, the state, and employers. Similar programs have been introduced in [Kentucky](#) and [North Dakota](#). In Kansas, communities are exploring innovative multi-payer child care business models to improve child care capacity and sustainability.

MULTI-PAYER CHILD CARE BUSINESS MODELS



Michigan: MI Tri-Share

The cost of an employee’s child care is equally shared among the employer, the employee, and the State of Michigan — a three-way split — with regional coordination provided by a MI Tri-Share facilitator hub.

Kentucky: Employee Child Care Assistance Partnership Program

The cost of an employee’s child care is shared by the employer, the employee, and Kentucky’s Cabinet for Health and Family Services. The amount contributed by the Cabinet is based on family size and income level.

North Dakota: Child Care Assistance Program

The cost of child care for families who are working or participating in education or training programs is shared between the family and the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services. The amounts contributed by families and the Department are based on family size and income level.

Recognizing the interdependence between economic vitality and high-quality child care, the Department of Commerce has collaborated with the Kansas Children's Cabinet to increase access to child care. This has included a set-aside for child care projects in the [Community Development Block Grant](#) (CDBG) that encourages new business development and expansion projects in Kansas communities to prioritize child care and employee quality of life in their decision-making. Additionally, the [Community Service Tax Credit Program](#) (CSP) is an initiative that incentivizes child care expansion by awarding tax credits to qualified donors in rural communities. In 2023, almost [\\$1 million in CSP tax credits](#) were targeted toward projects seeking to address the child care shortage. Funding initiatives like the CDBG and CSP are key activities that bring together diverse partners and innovative ideas to directly address child care shortages in local communities. In many counties across Kansas, local economic development representatives and business communities are forming child care task forces to accomplish this goal. Examples include:

- **Wichita County.** Wichita County Economic Development partnered with the local K-State Research and Extension office, local school district, Head Start, and other local organizations to build a new child care center.
- **Douglas County.** The Lawrence Chamber of Commerce is one of several key partners working to secure funding for a building which will house The Community Children Center's Family Resource Center, Provider Support Program, and child care program. The project will create 140 new child care slots.
- **Marion County.** Local business leaders worked with the city of Hillsboro and the Hillsboro Community Foundation to create the non-profit Hillsboro Community Child Care (H4C), which has received a donated building from Trinity Mennonite Church and is working to secure funds for renovations. Once operational, the building will house a child care center capable of caring for 99 children from birth to age five.



Community Child Care Capacity Building

Child Care Aware of Kansas (CCA-KS), through PDG and DCF CCDF funding, provides regional supports to communities seeking to build and maintain child care capacity from pre-planning to ongoing programmatic support and every step in between. Public and private funding generally require implementation plans to demonstrate how child care programs will support affordable, high-quality child care in their local Kansas communities. These community-specific plans call for committed groups to initiate planning and maintain capacity-building activities to sustain child care in their communities.

Community Child Care Capacity Building Process



STEP 1: Pre-planning to build initial readiness

- Initial coalition-forming.
- Community-level needs assessment.
- Guidance on economic impact.



STEP 2: Developing a plan through a Communities in Action (CIA) Workshop

- Learning from early childhood experts and other content experts from across the Kansas early childhood ecosystem.
- Receiving customized child care supply/demand data.
- Identifying and developing short- and long-term goals during structured planning time with an expert community coach.
- Receiving a child care capacity toolkit .



STEP 3: Seeking funding opportunities

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).
- Community Service Tax Credit Program (CSP).
- Community Capacity Building Grants (as available).



STEP 4: Following up with implementation support

- Ongoing support tailored to the readiness, pace, and scale of each community to successfully execute the action plan.



STEP 5: Ongoing support from Child Care Go Team

- A continuum of supports to navigate community-specific needs and barriers.
- May include identification of community assets, resources and funding, child care solution design, navigation of state and local licensing and building regulations, and subsidy enrollment supports.

Community Spotlight

Child Care Solutions

Ellis County: EcoDevo Partners

- Ellis County acknowledges the pivotal role of child care in supporting its economy. The 2021 Ellis County Health Needs Assessment highlighted the profound impact of quality child care on family well-being and workforce stability. Recognizing this, the Hays Chamber of Commerce convened the Child Care Task Force in September 2021, focusing on employers' workforce concerns. Their goal is to establish a high-quality child care programs, attracting employees and fostering future community leaders.
- The task force leveraged the voices of elected officials and employers to secure local business support, expanded capacity, and apply for grants. Public and private support followed as a result, including pandemic relief funding, contributions from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation and businesses.
- Ellis County's success underscores the vital role of child care in supporting both healthy families and a thriving local economy, and demonstrates innovative ways to blend public and private funding streams.

Dickinson County: Stronger Together

In the last three years, substantial investments have transformed Kansas communities, with Dickinson County as a standout example. Three rural towns united to address child care challenges:

- **Capacity** In Herington, a child care center was established in 2020, and with state support, is expanding to double capacity in 2024.
- **Affordability** In Solomon, an affordable child care center that accepts state Child Care Assistance will be opening for 24 children.
- **Workforce** In Abilene, a training and recruitment program was implemented to strengthen the local early childhood workforce.

Through authentic engagement, coalition building, and leveraging local and state resources, these child care administrators are improving the lives of Kansas children and families. Their combined efforts will increase child care supply by 31% in 2024. Dickinson County's success serves as a model for how collaboration within one county can secure investments in early childhood and develop community-specific solutions.

McPherson County: Cultivating the Early Childhood Workforce

- In 2018, McPherson County recognized the child care challenge: A shortage of highly qualified professionals due to low pay. In 2021, a task force was formed to create more child care slots and offer competitive wages for child care professionals. Partners like K-State Extension and the McPherson County Community Foundation played vital roles.
- Together, they secured a \$500,000 grant to enhance the workforce, develop degree pathways, and streamline administrative tasks through a shared service center. The goal: Create 250 new slots and a Dream Fund to reduce family costs to \$500 per child per month. McPherson County's success demonstrates that community engagement and state support can facilitate workforce development to ensure availability of high-quality child care.

Cross-Agency Collaboration

In 2023, state agency partners collaborated with the private sector to braid funds successfully for the Accelerator grant program. **The Kansas Children's Cabinet awarded nearly \$55 million in grants to 67 organizations to accelerate the creation of new, high-quality licensed child care slots.** As part of these Accelerator grants, \$3 million in additional funding was awarded across 16 Kansas communities that proposed innovative strategies to sustainably address child care needs by leveraging partnerships and community investments, often through matched funding. The Accelerator is expected to create 5,655 new slots over the next few years. Kansas agency leaders recognize that addressing the child care capacity shortage in significant and meaningful ways requires blending of financial resources. The Accelerator grant program braided funding from four public and private sources:

\$1 million

Federal Preschool Development Birth-5 planning grant
(through ACF).

The State Fiscal Recovery Fund of the American Rescue Plan (approved by the SPARK Executive Committee and State Finance Council).

\$20 million

\$31 million

Federal Child Care Development Block Grant ARPA Discretionary funds (through DCF).

The Patterson Family Foundation gift.

\$2.5 million

On the Horizon...

In fall 2023 and early 2024, Kansas began awarding \$38 million through a competitive grant program for capital improvements to facilities that offer child care, made possible by the United States Treasury under the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (CPF) program. **In October 2023, the first round of awards totaling \$10 million was approved, and an additional \$28 million will be awarded in February 2024.**

The Accelerator grant program is a promising model for how multiple funding streams can be blended and braided to address child care needs. The federal government is the nation's largest funder of early childhood programs, and federal dollars typically follow the path of least resistance: health dollars to health agencies, education dollars to education agencies, and so forth (First Five Years Fund [FFYF], 2023b). This fragmentation of resources can cause potential duplication of effort and administration costs, suboptimal coordination across programs, and,

most notably, bureaucratic mazes for families seeking services. Distribution of federal funds, communication, and policy making usually follow the distinct missions and procedures of each agency, with compliance mandates stemming from the requirements of each unique funding source. The best interests of the young child and the needs of the family can sometimes take second place in favor of adherence to these often conflicting and confusing regulatory constraints.

In efforts to begin reconciling regulatory differences, KDHE (2023a) conducted a comprehensive review of 59 child care licensure regulations. Researchers recommend that child care licensure reviews, like the one conducted by KDHE, can be informed and strengthened by rigorous economic research on the effects of licensing on child safety and health to maximize positive outcomes for children and families, and ultimately Kansas (Heggeness et al., 2024). As of September 5, 2023, there have been proposed changes for 43 regulations. These efforts are anticipated to increase statewide capacity for child care, modernize early childhood practices, support early childhood professional development, and ensure initial health and safety training and better alignment with federal requirements. The proposed changes have been reviewed by the Governor's Office and the KDHE Executive Team and are moving through the state regulation promulgation process. Adoption and implementation of these proposed changes are anticipated to go into effect in 2024.

Lessons learned from navigating public-private partnerships for child care will inform our future efforts. First and foremost, we must continue to support community-driven, public-private partnerships because they generate child care solutions that are specific to each community. Additionally, the regulation overhaul is a significant accomplishment that will help to resolve inefficiency and align priorities, serving as a model as we continue identifying challenges and cross-agency collaboration to address.

Connecting the Dots for Families, Professionals, and Communities

As we work to better support collaboration and alignment across the early childhood ecosystem, various partner groups have focused on connecting families, professionals, and communities to relevant services and supports. Increased efforts to implement innovative tools, practices, and approaches across the ecosystem have improved ecosystem navigation by ensuring that families and early childhood professionals can access relevant services and supports.

A key finding of the 2019 Needs Assessment was that families needed to adopt a "connect the dots" approach to navigate services across sectors. Here is a range of approaches that were developed and implemented to help families and professionals navigate the early childhood ecosystem:

1-800-CHILDREN

This statewide helpline has grown in scope and reach as a 24-hour resource for families and early childhood professionals seeking care and education support, information, and resources.

Integrated Referral and Intake System (IRIS)

This referral and intake system has been implemented in many Kansas communities to strengthen professional partnerships and streamline access to resources and services.

Telehealth

Efforts have increased around identifying and supporting telehealth opportunities that improve access to specialty services in rural areas.

Home Visiting Leadership Teams

Teams are working collaboratively to increase access to home visiting services and care coordination pilot work at KDHE.

Child Care Matters

This step-by-step guide, developed by KDHE and supported by PDG funding, helps child care administrators navigate licensing requirements and processes.

Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ)

Professional access to the ASQ, an evidence-based, standardized screening tool, has been expanded across Kansas and helps connect families to the right services as early as possible.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

In August 2023, the Kansas Children's Cabinet, in collaboration with the Dollywood Foundation and statewide community partners, announced that the Imagination Library would now be available to every child in Kansas from birth to their fifth birthday. Every eligible child in Kansas can enroll to receive one free, high-quality, age-appropriate book per month.

Child Care in Kansas website

This consumer education website, administered by DCF and coordinated with partners across the state, is a "one-stop shop" experience for families, providers, communities, and employers as they navigate child care and relevant topics. Since its launch in September 2023, the site has averaged 30,000 users per month.

Quality Assurance Strategies

Kansas aims to provide high-quality early childhood services to children and families to support healthy development, strong families, and early learning. Quality assurance measures are regularly implemented to evaluate programs across early childhood settings, including child care, preschool, and home visiting programs.

High-Quality Classrooms

As part of the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) evaluation, grantees are assessed with the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), a measure of classroom quality. Since 2018, the evaluation has increasingly identified more high-quality classrooms every year in Kansas. Notably, the 2023 ECBG evaluation found that quality averages were above benchmark for all CLASS indicators, and **there was a 10% increase in high-quality classrooms identified from fall 2022 to spring 2023**, from 67% to 77% (n = 556). *Schrepferman, 2023*

Links to Quality

Through DCF, Kansas continues to build and refine the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), [Links to Quality \(L2Q\)](#), which provides early childhood programs with a path toward quality improvement above and beyond that of standard licensing requirements. L2Q is composed of standards in four content areas: program administration, family partnerships, health and safety, and learning and development. Across the state, **36 early childhood programs successfully participated in a two-year L2Q pilot program and provided valuable feedback to improve the program's infrastructure**. Next, these same early childhood programs will pilot the L2Q's first pathway for demonstrating program administration competencies. Upon completing this pilot, participating early childhood programs will be the first to earn one of four future "Links" demonstrating high quality across program standards.

The Kansas Early Learning Standards

[The Kansas Early Learning Standards \(KELS\)](#), revised in 2023 and adopted by the Kansas Children's Cabinet in its role as state Early Childhood Advisory Council in 2024, promote quality early childhood learning opportunities and environments. The KELS provide early childhood professionals and families with **up-to-date, research-based guidance regarding the scope and sequence of early childhood development**, serving as a clear overview for the complex and foundational learning that caring, knowledgeable adults can facilitate. Early childhood professionals can utilize this multi-purpose tool as they plan developmentally appropriate activities, select and implement evidence-based curricula, and partner with families around early learning. This is the fourth version of the KELS since being introduced in 2006 and the first revision in over a decade.

Continuous Quality Improvement

Beginning in 2022, the KDHE Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Team utilized parent-child interaction observations to support positive caregiver-child interactions. Following these CQI efforts, the **Parent Child Interaction screening rate benchmark improved by 10.1% from 63.1% of families receiving an observation in 2021 to 73.2% in 2023**. *Kansas MIECHV Program, 2023*

Another way of connecting the dots for Kansas children, families, and communities is through prevention education, which can provide a range of interrelated benefits. Community-based efforts through the Chronic Disease Risk Reduction (CDRR) program have been found to support tobacco cessation and prevention, promote healthy activities and habits, and prioritize health (KU-CPPR, 2022b). As an example, Community Baby Shower events combined education about safe sleep, breastfeeding, parenting, and tobacco cessation and prevention along with disseminating resources and materials for new parents in need. In addition to informational and educational support, these community events also served as opportunities for new or soon-to-be parents to establish social connections and peer support. Because parent and caregiver actions and decisions shape their children's environments and experiences, prevention education can facilitate a range of benefits, such as connecting families to other services and supports across the early childhood ecosystem and their communities.

Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust

The Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust oversees the state’s Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) resources and implementation. The intent is to derive value and efficiency in sharing and integrating early childhood data across five state agencies to inform impact, effectiveness, fiscal return on investment, and access to services for children and families in Kansas.

An important initiative of both PDG B-5 and the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan is the Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust (Data Trust), which established a governing board whose members are committed to using a data-driven approach to inform the future of our early childhood system. The Data Trust Governance Board, with the Kansas Children’s Cabinet as Trustee, meets quarterly to develop sustainable practices for reviewing and prioritizing authorized projects and best practices for improving both data use and data literacy. Together, these agencies have developed practices and tools to allow sharing of data and information in ways that will improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of programs and services for Kansas children and families. The Data Trust makes this essential work possible. Over time, this kind of collaboration and targeted analysis of our state’s return on investment across programs, and over the course of a child’s life, will help ensure brighter futures for Kansas children and families.

**Agencies Participating
in the Data Trust**



While the newly formed Data Trust has become the mechanism for enabling safe and secure data sharing among state agencies, dedicated resources are needed to truly transform the way the Kansas early childhood ecosystem collects, analyzes, and uses data for impact. To fully realize the potential of the Data Trust, we need to regularly involve agency staff, researchers, and community members to articulate research questions and divide up the work and resources to know the current impact of collective actions across the early childhood ecosystem.

Authorized Projects

Currently, there are two Authorized Projects executed under the Data Trust to develop usable insights from data collected within the early childhood ecosystem:

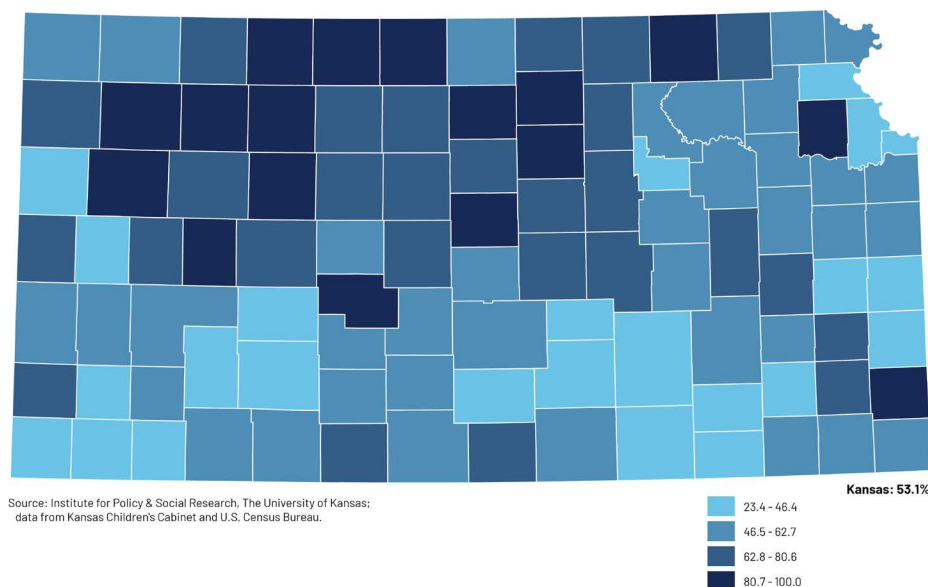
- The Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) and the Prevention of Foster Care Removals.
- The Distinct Count of Children in Early Care and Education Services.

In [Authorized Project 1](#), researchers conducted a pilot study that linked and integrated ECBG data with DCF data to identify the most effective systems approach for preventing child maltreatment and family separation (Data Trust, 2021). Pilot study results showed that children were significantly less likely to be placed in foster care after their families participated in services within the early childhood ecosystem, compared to children whose families had not participated in services ([Data Trust, 2022](#)). Insights from this pilot study suggest that children and families have better chances of thriving when they are connected to relevant supports in a timely manner. In short, intervening early to support children and families works and this approach requires a coordinated, collaborative, streamlined early childhood ecosystem.

Authorized Project 2 is the Distinct Count of Children in Early Care and Education Services ([Data Trust, 2022](#)). Through this project, the [Distinct Count of Children Data Dashboard](#) was developed and launched in December 2023 to provide the best available data for unduplicated, accurate counts of children and families served in Kansas. This publicly available tool supports cross-agency collaboration across the early childhood ecosystem while also providing the general public with access to the same data. Further, this Authorized Project established a better understanding of existing data systems across agencies in the ecosystem. This tool allows us to identify areas for improvement, help us better define our state's early childhood ecosystem, and refine our understanding of child and family needs that vary based on several factors, such as demographics, economics and geography.

The Distinct Count of Children Data Dashboard is already being put to use. [Figure 4](#) provides estimates of the percentage of children served by the Kansas early childhood programs in each county, which include child care, home visiting, early intervention services, and preschool. In four counties, the estimated number of children served exceeded population estimates of the total number of children. These values were top-coded at 100% for the map below. Though these estimates may not capture every early childhood program and may include some duplicates in the distinct count, data coordinated through Authorized Project 2 help us identify where more focused efforts and supports are needed across the state.

**Figure 4. Percent of Children Served
by Early Childhood Programs in Kansas, by County, 2022**



Distinct Count Data Highlights

212,462

The estimated number of children under 6 years old in Kansas.

The number of children who received early childhood services.

113,523

47%

The percentage of children ages 3- to 5-years-old who participate in early childhood services. This is the highest percentage among all age groups.

35,475 served/75,061 children based on age data.

The percentage of children under 6 years old who were served by home visiting programs.

12,321 children served / 212,462 children under 6 years old.

<6%

Source: Distinct Count of Children Data Dashboard (Kansas Children's Cabinet, 2023)

The original intent and ultimate goal of Authorized Project 2 is to create a cross-system database of unduplicated data and a distinct count of individuals served. These data would enable statistical methods, such as multivariate regression and social network analysis, to identify the impact of services across the ecosystem and throughout the lifespan. Additionally, these results will help inform partners how to effectively intervene with specific populations. Navigating privacy requirements remains

a central challenge to realizing this goal. Through the Data Trust, Kansas is becoming better able to make data-informed decisions and follow the long-term impact of those decisions. Yet, we have an opportunity—and a responsibility—to do much more to improve and accelerate data sharing efforts that address underserved populations, issues of accessing supports, and enhance understandings of where to make targeted investments in response to Needs Assessment findings.

Early Childhood Transition Task Force

Nearly two decades ago, other states started developing solutions to streamline programs and services for children and families, an approach that has gained momentum in recent years as more states have been engaging in similar efforts (Hunt Institute, 2023a). Approaches to unify early childhood programs and services have varied across states but remain a bipartisan initiative generally focused on improving consistency, efficiency, and effectiveness for all early childhood ecosystem partners. For example, Colorado and Missouri leaders have developed single entities within their respective states that are dedicated to serving young children and families through a streamlined early childhood ecosystem (Hunt Institute, 2023a). In Kansas, during listening sessions held across the state as part of the Task Force work, there was consensus among attendees that the biggest barriers to better alignment within our ecosystem are cross-agency inconsistencies and inefficiencies (KU-CPPR, 2023a). Current and potential child care administrators reported frustrations with navigating dual requirements of licensing through KDHE (KU-CPPR, 2023a).

 COLORADO Established an entirely new state-level Department of Early Childhood.	 KANSAS Operates a coordinated governance structure across multiple state agencies that provide services to children and families.	 MISSOURI Developed a new division, the Office of Childhood, under the state's existing Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
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Based on discussion and feedback generated from statewide listening session participants, the Task Force identified the following considerations to improve the early childhood ecosystem's consistency and efficiency (Counts & Gardner, 2023; KU-CPPR, 2023a):

- formalize decision-making authority across state agencies
- enhance coordination across many service models
- streamline/align/optimize funding streams towards common goals
- improve access to services and supports for young children, families, and early childhood professionals
- develop a consolidated, modernized data system that eases community and program reporting burdens and equips decision-makers with needed information
- bolster support for professionals across the ecosystem
- better leverage federal funds (e.g. CCDF)
- build capacity for underutilized programs (e.g. universal home visiting)

With Executive Order 23-01, Governor Kelly designated the Task Force to work towards creating a single-agency governance structure that consolidates initiatives and funding under the leadership of a new Cabinet-level position.

Early Childhood Transition Task Force Timeline

January, 10, 2023

Governor Kelly signed Executive Order 23-01, creating the Task Force.

February 21, 2023

Governor Kelly announced Task Force membership. The Hunt Institute, which focuses on education policy support, was recognized as providing staffing support to help Kansas establish an effective and efficient early childhood ecosystem.

March 31, 2023

Meeting 1: The Kansas Early Childhood Landscape. A working draft of the [Kansas Early Childhood Program Inventory](#) was presented.

May 16, 2023

Meeting 2: Lessons from Other States. A detailed review was presented of other state approaches to unifying early childhood: organizational structure, leadership, governance, and timeline. (Hunt Institute, 2023d).

June 27-30, 2023

Community Engagement Tour. Engaged community partners in listening sessions across Kansas.

July 1, 2023

Interim Report from Task Force issued. (Hunt Institute, 2023c)

August 17, 2023

Meeting 3: Lessons from Community Engagement Tour. Synthesis of community engagement sessions was presented and initial recommendations were discussed. Task Force created three work groups to develop recommendations on programmatic movements, transition logistics, and metrics and data.

September 21-28, 2023

Work Groups met to begin developing draft recommendations.

October 18, 2023

Draft Task Force Recommendations presented and reviewed. Recommendations and feedback developed into blueprint for consolidation.

December 11, 2023

Final Report from Task Force delivered to Governor Kelly. Following delivery of the report and sample legislation, Governor Kelly will determine how her administration will proceed and utilize the Task Force's recommendations to improve the early childhood system in Kansas.



The Kansas Early Childhood Workforce

Introduction and Guiding Questions

In this section, we describe the early childhood workforce and the supports needed to sustain high-quality professionals working with young children and their families. We envision a cohesive system that recruits, retains, and advances a diverse workforce qualified to meet the changing needs of young children and families. Although our workforce includes a range of professional fields beside child care, such as early intervention, early education, home visiting, infant/toddler mental health, and social work, we focus on child care here because that has been identified as the greatest need and must be tackled first.

While strides were made to streamline workforce development opportunities, systemic changes are still necessary to attract and retain highly qualified child care professionals in the early childhood workforce. Further, child care professionals across Kansas must be respected and feel valued for their essential role of facilitating early learning and healthy development for our youngest Kansans. The *All In for Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan outlines goals for supporting the workforce and identifies key strategies to recruit, retain, and value early childhood professionals. Those strategies informed questions that guided this section:

How effective are efforts to recruit and retain highly qualified child care professionals in Kansas? What strategies are being implemented to recruit, train, and retain highly qualified early childhood professionals? What challenges still exist for growing and strengthening the workforce?

How is Kansas implementing high-quality, competency-based professional development? What are the gaps or barriers for professionals to access and participate in professional development opportunities?

Workforce Accomplishments

KANSAS CHILD CARE WORKFORCE

18,051
child care
professionals

in the Kansas workforce.

DCF, 2024; KDHE, 2024



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

To date, the Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO) Child Care Development Accreditation (CDA) has awarded...



1,439

professional
development and
support service
scholarships



74

Completions
with KCCTO CDA



135

Participants
supported on
training track

PROJECTED CAPACITY INCREASE

Initiatives funded through the Child Care Accelerator grant program are projected to create

5,655
child care slots



TEMPORARY FUNDING

4,125
child care programs
were supported

by The American Rescue Plan's
Child Care Stabilization Program.



Average funding distributions per child care program

Center-based

\$111,600 (avg)

largely dedicated
toward staffing costs.

Home-based

\$18,000

primarily covered
overhead costs.

These temporary investments
indirectly supported 127,300 children
across the state but funding was
only authorized through September 2023.

WORKFORCE SUPPORT

\$29,668,250

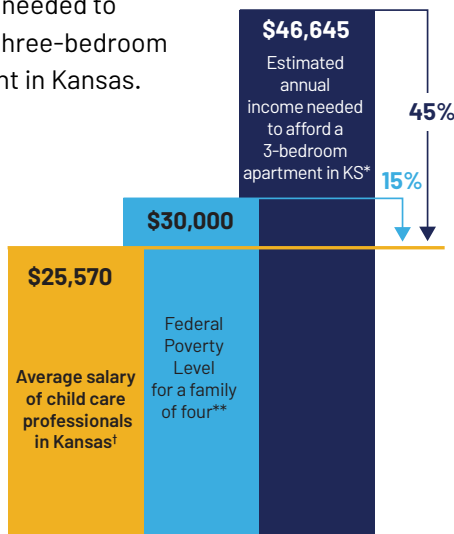
in **Child Care Workforce Appreciation
Bonuses** were distributed to
support 12,556 child care
professionals across
Kansas. Bonuses ranged
from **\$750** to **\$2,500**.



Workforce Gaps

INCOME DISPARITY

Kansas child care professionals earn an average salary of \$25,570[†], which is below the Federal Poverty Level for a family of four at \$30,000[‡] and far below the estimated annual income of \$46,645[‡] needed to afford a three-bedroom apartment in Kansas.

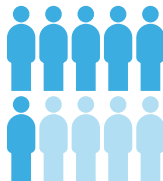


[†]BLS, 2023b ^{**}HHS, 2023

[‡]National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2023

AWARENESS OF CORE COMPETENCIES

Respondents to the KCCTO Statewide Workforce Needs Assessment indicate that they...


are unaware of early childhood core competencies (60%)


do not have professional development plans (44%)

UNMET CHILD CARE NEEDS

Kansas has an estimated unmet child care need of about 56%*, which is in part attributable to the shortage of child care professionals[†].



According to KDHE (2023b), total licensed child care facilities decreased from 2012-2021 but began increasing in 2023. As of August 31, 2023 total licensed capacity was at its highest point since KDHE began tracking in 2008.

*CCA-KS, 2023b [†]CCA-KS, 2023a

STAFF TURNOVER

MCH public health programs experienced a **decrease of 32% in full-time equivalent staff** between 2020 and 2023.

KU-CPPR, 2023c

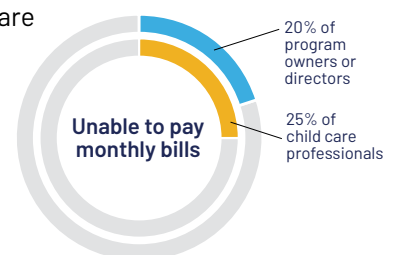
INCOME CONSIDERATIONS

In a survey of Kansas child care professionals...



67% of child care professionals indicate that **wages and benefits are a top priority** when deciding where to work.

About 20% of child care program owners or directors and 25% of child care professionals are **unable to pay their bills every month.**



Kaminski & Green, 2022

Workforce Summary Findings

Findings related to the Kansas early childhood workforce were developed through in-depth review of existing data and relevant reports (see [Introduction Section](#)), collection of perspectives from across the Kansas early childhood ecosystem, and data synthesis of these important yet distinct insights.

WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND RETENTION

✓ *Integrated initiatives are being launched to recruit, retain, and elevate highly qualified early childhood professionals.*

! *Many early childhood professionals do not earn livable wages and question how long they can remain in the field.*



AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE

✓ *Statewide strategies helped child care administrators keep their doors open despite workforce shortages, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

! *Future sustainability of the field without long-term funding infrastructure is questionable.*



Kansas Early Childhood Professionals

The early childhood workforce consists of professionals across the many disciplines that make up the early childhood ecosystem. Early childhood professionals facilitate high-quality, early learning and development for young children, and they support families to do the same, which occurs through child care, early intervention (EI), preschool, and early childhood special education. Additionally, professionals promote child and family well-being through early childhood, as well as related sectors, such as mental health, health care, behavioral health, and economic and employment supports. Depending on which services and supports are being provided to whom and by whom, professionals work across home-, center- community-, school-, clinic-, and virtual-based settings. More than 18,051 professionals make up the child care workforce in Kansas and serve in a range of settings and roles, as displayed in [Table 5](#) and [Table 6](#) (DCF, 2024; KDHE, 2024; KSDE, 2023a).

Table 5. Licensed Facilities in the Kansas Child Care Workforce

Facility Type	Count*	Titles/Roles
Child Care Centers including licensed Head Starts	12,673	Owner/operator, Program Director, Assistant Program Director, Teaching Staff
Licensed Day Care Homes	1,842	Owner/operator, Program Director Primary Caregiver
Group Day Care Homes	1,748	Owner/operator, Program Director, Primary Caregiver
Preschools	342	Owner/operator, Program Director, Assistant Program Director, Teaching Staff
Total Professionals	16,605	

Table 6. Unlicensed (Legally Exempt) Facilities in the Kansas Child Care Workforce

Facility Type	Count	Titles/Roles
Unlicensed Head Starts	298#	Lead Teacher, Assistant Teacher
Public Preschools including special education	1,113^	Pre-Kindergarten licensed teacher
Private Accredited Preschools	35^	Pre-Kindergarten licensed teacher
Military Child Care Programs (home or center)	Unknown	N/A
Total Professionals	1,446 (excluding Military programs)	

* Kansas Department of Health and Environment, January 2024.

^ Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) Education Directory Report data (Early Childhood/Preschool and Early Childhood Special Education personnel) as of December 2023 https://uapps.ksde.org/Directory_Rpts/default.aspx; although the majority of public school PreK programs are not licensed, some of the staff could be working in licensed facilities and already counted in the 16,605 total.

Kansas Department for Children and Families Head Start Collaboration Office, January 2024.

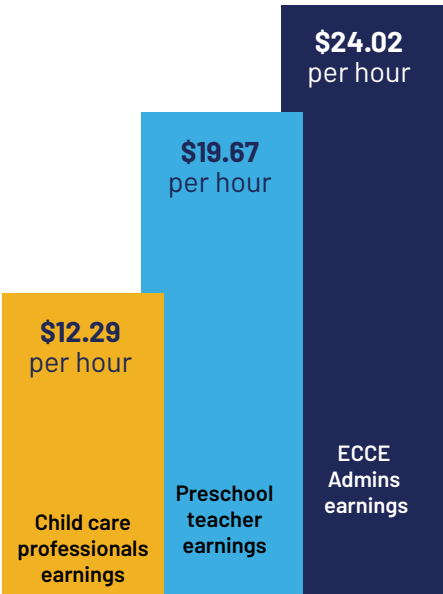
According to CCA-KS (2023a), the number of licensed child care programs in Kansas decreased by 10.9% between 2019 and 2022. From 2022 to 2023, there was a slight increase with 80 newly licensed programs, but there are still 415 fewer programs now than there were in 2019. With home-based child care programs being a large part of the closures in Kansas, there are now fewer program staff in home-based programs and more located in center-based programs when comparing current numbers reported in [Table 5](#) to those reported in the 2021 Needs Assessment Update. Additionally, the number of child care professionals across the state has slightly increased (1,791) between these two reports.

Currently, Kansas has an estimated unmet child care need of about 56%, which means that the demand for child care is higher than the supply of child care professionals and programs (CCA-KS, 2023b), and the shortage of child care professionals is considered a contributing factor to the gap between child care supply and demand (CCA-KS, 2023a). While supply is low, child care costs have been increasing for families. Yet, child care professional earnings are frequently below the Federal Poverty Level.



Licensed child care programs in Kansas include public and private home-, center-, and school-based programs (KDHE, 2023f). Child care professionals across these programs meet children’s basic needs while facilitating age-appropriate learning; they support social, emotional, cognitive, and motor development. Additionally, child care professionals can facilitate environments where children can develop healthy habits and routines, such as planning, preparing, and cleaning up nutritious meals, and can connect families to relevant resources, such as public health supports (KU-CPPR, 2022b). Of the total child care programs in Kansas, more than 3,200 are home-based programs (KDHE, 2023f). Child care administrators have competing demands because they serve as early childhood professionals and small-business owners who must manage the responsibilities of running a business (e.g., banking, purchasing supplies, cleaning) in addition to facilitating early learning and development (National Conference of State Legislators, 2021).

“If child care professionals were predominately male, would the pay/support be greater?” *Early childhood professional (KU-CPPR, 2023a)*



In the 2019 Needs Assessment, we identified an urgent need for better compensation, benefits, and training for the early childhood workforce. Although many early care and education professionals have extensive experience, with almost half (48.1%) having at least 16 years in the field (Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities [KCCTO], 2022), they generally earn very low wages. Child care professionals earn the least out of all professionals in the early childhood workforce with an average hourly wage of \$12.29, which is about two-thirds the average hourly wage of preschool teachers (\$19.67) and about half the average hourly wage of early childhood administrators (\$24.02; Center for the Study of Child Care Employment [CSCCE], 2021).

Additionally, early childhood professionals who work in public school-based programs generally earn higher wages, compared to their peers in private in-home and small center-based programs, and commonly receive comprehensive benefits packages that include health insurance and retirement plans (CSCCE, 2021). In a survey with 196 Kansas child care professionals, two-thirds (67%) of participants indicated that wage and benefit offerings were a top priority when deciding for which program they wanted to work (Kaminski & Green, 2022).

Since 2019, the average hourly wage for Kansas child care professionals has increased by 6% or just \$0.71, equating to a gross annual wage of \$25,570 (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2023b). However, the income needed to afford a three-bedroom apartment in Kansas is an estimated \$46,645, which is almost double the average annual income of a child care professional (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2023). Kansas child care professionals often earn insufficient wages to cover their basic living expenses. For example, about 20% of child care program owners or directors and 25% of child care professionals are not able to pay their bills every month (Kaminski & Green, 2022). An even larger share of each would not be able to cover a modest emergency expense.

Further, research from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (2019) has demonstrated that

care professionals (53%) are generally more likely than preschool and kindergarten teachers (43%), and far more likely than elementary teachers (21%) and the overall workforce (21%) to utilize public income support programs, such as the Federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Child care professionals face compounding stressors of economic insecurity and demanding working conditions that negatively affect their health and well-being more than the average person (Quinn et al., 2023), which contributes to child care workforce turnover (Hamel et al., 2023). The child care workforce has an essential role in the Kansas economy and communities, but child care professionals are inadequately compensated.



Findings

Early childhood educators and other professionals in the field are on the front lines nurturing and caring for our youngest Kansans. They are asked to do far too much for far too little pay and respect. The early childhood workforce is full of skilled, dedicated, and hardworking professionals. As crafters of supportive environments that help Kansas children thrive, and as key drivers of our economic well-being, these professionals need livable wages, adequate benefit packages, and clear pathways for growth and advancement. Agencies, workgroups, and communities across Kansas have been collaborating and innovating to strengthen and elevate the workforce for long-term sustainability.

Recruiting and Retaining an Early Childhood Workforce

Attracting professionals to the early childhood workforce—and keeping them in the field—is a nationwide challenge. In the most recent national child care workforce data, there were 100,000 fewer child care professionals than there were before the pandemic (BLS, 2023b). Kansas appears to be incrementally recovering with more child care professionals in 2023 (18,051) compared to 2021 (16,260; *All In For Kansas Kids*, 2022; DCF, 2024; KDHE, 2024; KSDE, 2023a). This has been a gradual increase, as the total number of child care professionals working in licensed settings grew by 1,286 (7.9%) between 2021 and 2022 (KDHE, 2022b) and about 500 between 2022 and 2023 (3.1%).

Although the child care workforce has slowly grown in the past two years, early childhood workforce recruitment and retention efforts have become even more challenging since the onset of the pandemic, a sentiment echoed by nearly 70% of child care administrators who responded to

a national survey (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2022). Other early child disciplines have experienced similar turnover trends. For example, over half (52%) of the early childhood home visitors who completed the Professional Well-Being and Workplace Supports Survey reported symptoms of moderate or high burnout, and fewer home visitors indicated intentions to stay in the field with a decrease from 87% to 72% between 2022 and 2023, respectively (KDHE, 2023e). Professionals leaving their current roles and leaving the field altogether result in major service disruption for children and families, which can impede program quality.

Turnover in the early childhood workforce directly affects children and families. High turnover of early educators is associated with lower outcomes for children’s cognitive and social-emotional development, compared to children whose early educators remained consistent (Grunewald et al., 2022). Nationally, early childhood professionals who receive lower wages, such as those in home-based child care programs, are more likely to leave their job or the profession altogether, compared to others in the field who earn higher wages, such as professionals in center-based programs (Grunewald et al., 2022). Child care administrators in Kansas recognize that employees are more likely to remain at their current program when adequately compensated (KU-CPPR, 2023a). Consequently, burnout, financial insecurity, and inadequate benefits are top concerns for Kansas child care administrators and professionals who intend to stay in the child care workforce for five more years (Kaminski & Green, 2022). Without long-term, public and private investments, program administrators and families cannot absorb the actual costs of safe and high-quality child care in Kansas.

Child Care Professionals Earn Lower Annual Salaries Compared to Personal Care and Service Professionals (National Averages). *BLS, 2023c*



The Multiplier Effect



The benefits of wage parity for child care professionals go far beyond simply elevating the early childhood workforce. A Kansas-specific analysis by Dr. Tim Green, Director of Research and Data at Openfields, estimated the return on investment of new spending in the child care sector to hire a sufficient number of professionals to meet current child care demand and pay them an annual salary of \$28,175, which would be halfway between the current average salary of a child care professional and that of a preschool teacher in Kansas.

Such new spending would have a multiplier effect on earnings of all workers in the state: **for every additional dollar paid to child care professionals, an additional 50-51 cents are earned by other workers throughout the state, yielding a direct effect of \$131 million in earnings of all workers in the state** (Green, 2021). Spillover effects of growth in the child care sector, decreased absenteeism and turnover of working parents, and higher labor force participation of parents would yield an additional \$66 million.

Investing in child care benefits the entire Kansas economy.

The importance of enriching interactions, environments, and learning experiences begins in infancy, requiring early childhood professionals who work with infants and toddlers to have child development knowledge and training similar to their peers who work with older children (Shonkoff, 2022). Despite those similar expectations, pay disparities within the early childhood workforce cause child care professionals to leave settings with infants and toddlers for slightly better wages in preschool, kindergarten, or elementary settings. Kansas child care administrators have observed this trend with staff in their programs (KU-CPPR, 2023a). Consequently, there are valid concerns about the sustainability of recruiting and retaining a highly qualified early childhood workforce to meet the demand for infant care, even without addressing the pay disparities.

Challenges recruiting and retaining highly qualified child care professionals have taken a toll on child care administrators. In a national survey, most child care administrators (e.g., owners, directors, and managers) planned to stay in the industry over the next five years, but financial insecurity and burnout are concerns for both groups (Amadon et al., 2022). Child care administrators endure much of the burden to resolve the challenges of high turnover and inadequate wages.

Multidisciplinary approaches are hallmark collaboration and teaming practices in the early childhood ecosystem. Collaboration among early childhood, health, and related

service professionals is essential for providing care and education to young children with developmental delays or disabilities and their families. Recruitment and retention challenges are also present in these other fields. A stark example is found in the Kansas MCH public health programs that experienced a decrease of 32% in full-time equivalent staff between 2020 and 2023 (KU-CPPR, 2023c). In a spring 2023 survey of MCH programs, nearly half of the staff either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that their program was adequately staffed. In another recent study, almost two in five (39%) home visiting program supervisors and administrators reported that their program was not fully staffed (KU-CPPR, 2023c). For program leadership who reported not being fully staffed, only 16% were able to fill the vacancy within four weeks; over 40% in one to three months, 24% in three to six months; and 19% in over six months.

The pandemic made efforts to recruit and retain early childhood professionals more challenging. However, temporary funding opportunities emerged to support early childhood workforce recovery in response to the pandemic. DCF, KDHE, and Child Care Aware of Kansas collaborated to distribute funding from the American Rescue Plan’s Child Care Stabilization Program to help 4,125 child care programs stay open, which ensured quality child care options for families and consistent paychecks for child care professionals (ACF, 2023). On average, each

center-based child care program received \$111,600, which was largely dedicated to staffing costs, and each home-based child care program received \$18,000, much of which helped home-based child care administrators meet their overhead expenses. These temporary investments indirectly supported 127,300 children across Kansas but were only authorized through September 2023, leaving the future stability of child care uncertain without earnest long-term financial commitments from the state and federally.

In June 2022, Governor Kelly announced an initiative to provide \$53 million in Child Care Workforce Appreciation Bonuses directly to child care professionals across Kansas. These workforce appreciation bonuses ranged from \$750 to \$2,500 and were made available to more than 20,000 child care professionals in Kansas. KDHE and DCF spearheaded this effort, funded by Supplemental Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Discretionary Funds appropriated in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA). The bonuses represent a true, but temporary, bright spot for the child care system. However, only \$29,668,250 of the allocated amount was distributed because less than two-thirds (12,556) of eligible child care professionals applied for and received Appreciation Bonuses.

Child care administrators and professionals worry about these temporary programs ending and creating an even more dire child care situation (Stanford Center on Early Childhood, 2023a). While both programs are significant investments, they only briefly provide adequate support for a severely under-resourced workforce. Long-term funding solutions to provide the early childhood workforce with adequate wages are necessary for truly sustainable recruitment and retention.

Partner organizations in Kansas are exploring alternate business models to better position child care administrators for financial success. Shared Service Networks, funded by DCF and operated by Child Care Aware of Kansas, represent one model that is working to reduce administrative costs and other barriers to the child care industry long-term.



Workforce Development Initiatives

There is clear recognition of the impact that low wages and minimal benefits have on the early childhood workforce. The *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan prioritizes expanding the number of professionals entering and remaining in the workforce by articulating a comprehensive career pathway and launching a workforce registry. Three areas of current work to address tactics of the *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan are simpler avenues for training and education, incentives to develop and advance professionally, and improved coordination across funding and credentialing.

Coordinated early childhood workforce development initiatives can lead to adequate compensation, benefits, and supports for professional growth (Ullrich et al., 2017). Although compensation and benefit parity with kindergarten educators does not appear to be in the immediate future for Kansas (CSCCE, 2021), other workforce development initiatives serve as a stepping stone toward such aims. Considerable effort is underway to establish and maintain a highly qualified early childhood workforce in Kansas through the following initiatives: adopting a set of Core Competencies, establishing a Career Pathway, and developing a Workforce Registry.

The Workforce Development Advisory Group (WFDAG) consists of members from KCCTO, state agencies, non-profits, and child care professionals across the early childhood ecosystem. Tasked with ensuring that Kansas implements a high-quality, competency-based, early childhood professional development system, the WFDAG examined sets of early childhood professional core competencies to identify examples that best aligned with the current research, standards, and evidence-based practices. Efforts of this workgroup resulted in a formal recommendation, adopted by the Kansas Children's Cabinet in its role as the Early Childhood Advisory Council, to adapt the Nebraska Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals (Nebraska Department of Education, 2019) to meet the needs of children, families, and professionals in Kansas.

The adapted set of Core Competencies establishes foundational knowledge and skills for all early childhood professionals who provide high-quality services in Kansas. These Core Competencies help ensure that the early childhood workforce is prepared to meet the unique and evolving needs of children and families in Kansas. Adoption of new Core Competencies positions our early childhood

professionals as lifelong learners engaging in higher order thinking skills: understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The new Core Competencies are expected to be introduced in early 2024.

In alignment with the Core Competencies, an early childhood Career Pathway was recently developed to identify the sequence of stackable, portable credentials early childhood professionals need to advance in their careers. The Career Pathway includes seven levels that best reflect the sophisticated science of facilitating early learning and development of young children. The Career Pathway articulates the education, experience, and mentorship that early childhood professionals need as they progress through each of level of the pathway, ranging from Early Learner at Level 1 to Director at Level 7.



The Career Pathway was developed by the Professional Development Implementation Team (PDIT), in consultation with the WFDAG. The PDIT was comprised of leaders from three state agencies, the Kansas Children's Cabinet, DCF, and KDHE, and the two lead Kansas workforce development and technical assistance contractors: CCA-KS and Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO). PDIT facilitated more than 80 meetings with early childhood professionals who work in various settings: child care, infant/toddler programs, preschool, among others, to solicit input and address feedback. Based on the last rounds of feedback in the spring of 2023, adjustments were made to experience and educational requirements across each level of the

Career Pathway. The KCCTO implementation plan for the Career Pathway is under development with an expected start date in 2024.

In conjunction with the Career Pathway, Kansas state agency leaders and other partners, such as CCA-KS and KCCTO, are establishing an online workforce registry. Workforce registries generally offer professionals a place to document accomplishments, education, and experience, while also producing key datapoints about the workforce to inform policies and programs. A workforce registry also offers early childhood professionals a central location to document their goals and access high-quality professional development opportunities. Developing and implementing a workforce registry as a single, centralized portal alleviates previous challenges caused by multiple online portal interfaces. Considerable work has been done to eliminate conflicting or confusing information and to increase efficiency for tracking participation in professional development opportunities. In addition to benefiting professionals, the Workforce Registry in Kansas offers robust data on early childhood workforce recruitment and retention trends. These insights will better inform future early childhood ecosystem and workforce investments in local communities and statewide for years to come.

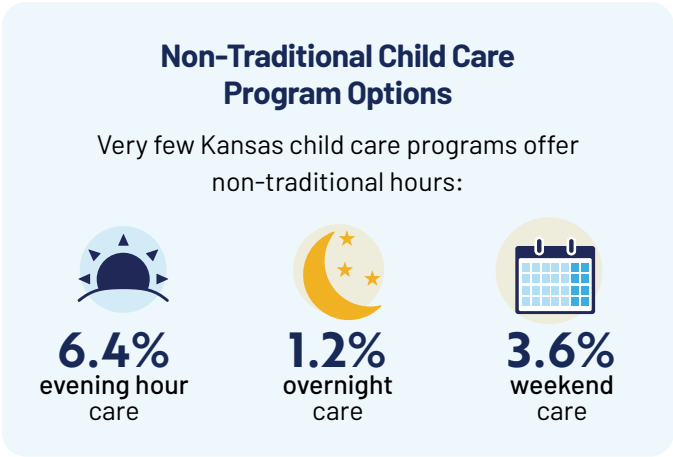
Currently, Kansas is one of only three states without an early childhood workforce registry (CSCCE, 2021), but not for long. Technical development on the early childhood Workforce Registry in Kansas is underway and being led by the Kansas Children’s Cabinet and KCCTO, which has made significant progress towards permanently elevating and professionalizing the early childhood workforce in Kansas. State agencies, specifically KDHE and DCF, and CCA-KS are vital collaborative partners in this work. Key components of the registry include a Learning Management System (LMS), a module for professional development, and a module for quality recognition. The Registry’s programming interface enables integration of relevant user-data from existing data systems across state agencies and organizations, such as KDHE’s child licensed facility and affiliate/worker database (CLARIS), and KCCTO’s training and credentialing database, among others. Integrating data systems across the ecosystem into one interface simplifies and modernizes the process of tracking, planning, and completing professional development and advancement. This initiative is funded by a combination of

dollars from three sources—CCDF relief, PDG, and CIF with coordination and alignment across the early childhood ecosystem. A working draft released in March 2023 outlined staffing, budget, and goals of the Registry. KDHE is also developing a new licensing database that is designed to be aligned with the Workforce Registry. Kansas plans to finalize and launch the Workforce Registry by June 2024.

To support the future of Kansas early childhood workforce initiatives, a comprehensive early childhood workforce study was initiated in November 2023 by KCCTO and the Office of Educational Innovation and Evaluation (OEIE) at Kansas State University. Researchers aim to reach over 3,000 participants including current and former early childhood professionals licensed in Kansas. Findings from this study are intended to inform Kansas workforce initiatives and can have broader implications for how the Kansas early childhood ecosystem supports the current and future workforce.

Child Care Program and Family Initiatives

DCF is undertaking several policy changes aimed at boosting family access to Child Care Assistance and increasing the number of programs that accept this form of payment in lieu of, or as a supplement to, family tuition payments. One of these initiatives involves using the subsidy to incentivize care that fills specific gaps in child care supply and demand. Currently, many families need care outside of traditional work hours, but few programs offer it. As of October 2023, only 249 (6.4%) licensed programs offered child care during evening hours, 45 (1.2%) provided overnight care, and 141 (3.6%) provided care during weekends (CCA-KS, 2023b).



To improve these numbers, DCF is working on differential payments above the Child Care Assistance maximum rates based on the provision of services during non-traditional hours. DCF is using the narrow cost analysis to better reflect the true cost of care for rate setting, as opposed to using only the market rate analysis. KDHE is also working with partners in long-term care, health care, law enforcement, and other sectors to find innovative ways to address non-traditional care.

The Child Care Quality Improvement and Support System grant from DCF allowed Child Care Aware of Kansas to establish a Shared Services Program for licensed Kansas child care programs. The goal of this initiative is to support

early childhood programs throughout Kansas to enhance the well-being, health, and development of young children while increasing program efficiency and decreasing costs. Shared Service Network Hubs offer shared administrative, substitute pools, telehealth options, and other services for networks of programs in the same region. Membership in these shared networks provides access to child care management software platforms with a range of scheduling, billing, enrollment, and reporting tools. Child Care Aware and other statewide partners have worked on developing these hubs and networks since 2022 and began operating the program in June 2023. Regional networks apply for funding and support through Child Care Aware.

Initiative Spotlight

Strengthening Our Early Childhood Workforce



Core Competencies

The Core Competencies establish foundational knowledge and skills for all early childhood professionals, which positions them as lifelong learners who engage in higher order thinking, such as understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating, in ways that are responsive to the range of children and families who they serve.

Career Pathway

The Career Pathway reflects the sophisticated science of facilitating early learning and development of young children and articulates the education, experience, and mentorship that early childhood professionals need as they progress in their careers as early childhood professionals.



Workforce Registry

The Workforce Registry will simplify and modernize the process of tracking, planning, and completing professional development and advancement, which will elevate the status of the early childhood workforce while also offering robust data on recruitment and retention trends to better inform future in early childhood investments.

Shared Service Network Hubs

Child Care Aware of Kansas and partners across the state are developing regional hubs to reduce operating costs for participating child care programs by offering a range of shared services and supports, including administrative services, substitute pools, and telehealth options.



Supporting Non-Traditional Child Care

DCF is developing a process to provide differential payments above the Child Care Assistance maximum for child care services offered during non-traditional hours to encourage child care supply outside of typical business hours.





Experiences of Children and Families

Introduction and Guiding Questions

In this section, we revisit a key finding from the initial *All In For Kansas Kids* Needs Assessment (2022a): the ability for Kansas families to have their basic needs met. To understand the experiences of children and families in Kansas, we assessed whether families have what they need to make informed decisions about, and have access to, early childhood services and supports where they live and work. The questions guiding this section are:

Are families able to meet their basic needs? What challenges do they face in doing so? What supports exist to help families meet their basic needs?

How do existing early childhood services and supports help families facilitate their child's growth, development, and well-being?

To what extent is the current network of early childhood services and supports able to anticipate the needs of Kansas children and families to ensure a desirable and sustainable future?

To what extent do families experience fragmentation across the early childhood ecosystem?

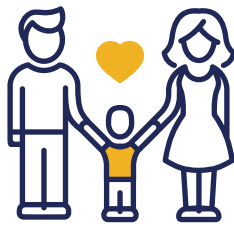
What are barriers to accessing early childhood programs and services?

Children and Families Accomplishments

KANSANS FEEL SUPPORTED

Nearly 70% of Kansans with children under 5 feel supported with the choices they have made in their personal lives.

KU-CPPR, 2023e



PROGRAM ENROLLMENT

635
more families were served by universal home visiting in fiscal year 2023 (from 2,054 to 2,679).



2,431
more preschool students were enrolled in the 2022-2023 school year.

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS

The Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ)* is now utilized by **286 Kansas public school districts and 175 other registered programs.**

95,000+
screenings

for both the ASQ-3 (all developmental domains) and ASQ:SE-2 (social-emotional domain) were completed in 2023.



*An online screening tool to assess children's developmental progress.

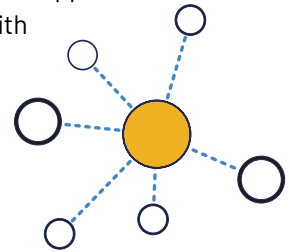
FAMILY SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

1-800-CHILDREN had

81,061 contacts

in 2023, an increase from 53,749 in 2021.

1-800-CHILDREN is the state's centralized access point for services and supports that may benefit families with children under 18 years old. Families can be connected to all early childhood services and supports through this resource.



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



The percentage of **birthing mothers who do not have a high school diploma has decreased by 5.1%** over the past decade (from 15.6% in 2011 to 10.5% in 2021).
KAC, 2023

KEY OUTCOMES

Kansas is performing **above the national median in key outcome measures**

largely because of early childhood services and supports.



90.1%

Access to prenatal care.

98.6%

Childhood food security.

42.6%

Infants and toddlers read to daily by family.

PN-3, 2023

PART C SERVICES

Infants and toddlers with documented disabilities or developmental delays meet federal eligibility criteria for Part C early intervention, but states have discretion to extend eligibility to children considered at-risk for disabilities (34 CFR §303.21).

Unfortunately, **Kansas children considered at-risk for disabilities are not eligible for early intervention services** because the state has not yet extended eligibility beyond the minimum federal requirements.

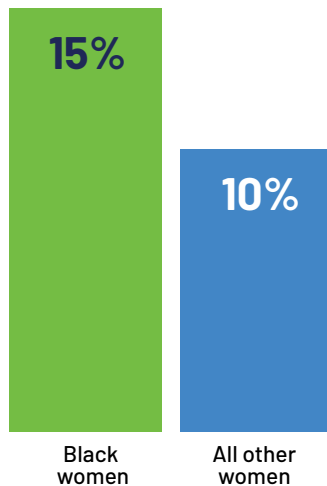


HEALTH CARE

The **preterm birth rate for Black women in Kansas is about 1.5 times higher** compared to all other women in Kansas.

KDHE, 2019

March of Dimes, 2022



Similarly, the **infant mortality rate among Black infants** per 1,000 live births in Kansas **is three times higher** than White infants. *KDHE, 2022a*

BASIC NEEDS

About **39%** of Kansas households cannot afford basic needs because their wages are too low: 12% of households live at or below 100% federal poverty level (FPL), which is \$30,000 annual income for a family of four, and an additional 27% of households earn above 100% FPL but still struggle to afford basic needs. *United for ALICE, 2023*



CHILD CARE

Child care remains unaffordable for most Kansas families. For a Kansas family of four earning a median household income of \$64,521, **child care for an infant and a four-year-old costs almost one-third (31%) of their annual income.**

U.S. Census Bureau, 2022b



NAVIGATION CHALLENGES

Early childhood **leadership and workforce turnover** due to retirement, burnout, and low wages makes ecosystem navigation more challenging for families.

*Grunewald et al., 2022;
KDHE & KU-CPPR, 2021; KU-CPPR, 2023c*

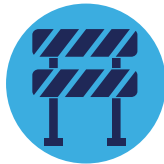
Children and Families Summary Findings

Findings related to experiences of Kansas children and families were developed through in-depth review of existing data and relevant reports (see [Introduction Section](#)), collection of perspectives from across the Kansas early childhood ecosystem, and data synthesis of these important yet distinct insights.

BASIC NEEDS ARE FUNDAMENTAL

✓ **Kansas implements services and supports to address individual child and family needs, such as improving family functioning, promoting mental health, and finding employment.**

! Many families cannot thrive because of barriers such as inadequate health care, inflexible employment opportunities, and low wages.



SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

✓ **Our youngest Kansans must have their basic needs met before they can lead future generations and thrive.**

! Fragmented early childhood services and supports cannot ensure a desirable and sustainable future for children and families.



The State of Children and Families in Kansas

Experiences of children and families are shaped by who they are, where they live and work, and what services and supports they might need. Here, we discuss the current state of children and families in Kansas. Though age ranges included in “early childhood” vary depending on context, we generally focus on children birth to five-years-old and have primarily incorporated sources that also focus on this age range.

Many types of family formations exist and are unique to each family: who makes up a family, how many members are in the family, and who has what role(s) in the family. Regardless of their makeup, families can provide children with safe, healthy, and loving environments, promote early learning and development, and foster well-being. To fulfill these functions, families often utilize state and local early childhood services and supports.

Children Under 6

From birth through their fifth year, young children’s interactions and opportunities strongly influence their long-term health, well-being, and success later in life. The first five years of every child’s life are crucial because early learning and development set the foundation for one’s experiences across the lifespan:



Relationships

A child’s ability to engage in kind and caring interactions and relationships with others forms during infancy through strong child-caregiver attachment and sustains across their lifespan. *Dahl & Paulus, 2019; Denault et al., 2023*



Development

A child’s cognitive (e.g., reasoning, critical thinking, and self-regulation) and socio-emotional (e.g., self-awareness, social-awareness, relationship-building) skill development supported in high-quality educational settings during preschool (ages three- to four-years old) are associated with positive educational attainment and earnings in adulthood. *Bustamante et al., 2022*



Well-Being

A child’s physical and mental well-being depend on access to nutritious food for the body and brain to develop and as a safeguard against illness and infection, which sustain physical and mental longevity through adulthood. *Roth et al., 2017*



Self-Regulation

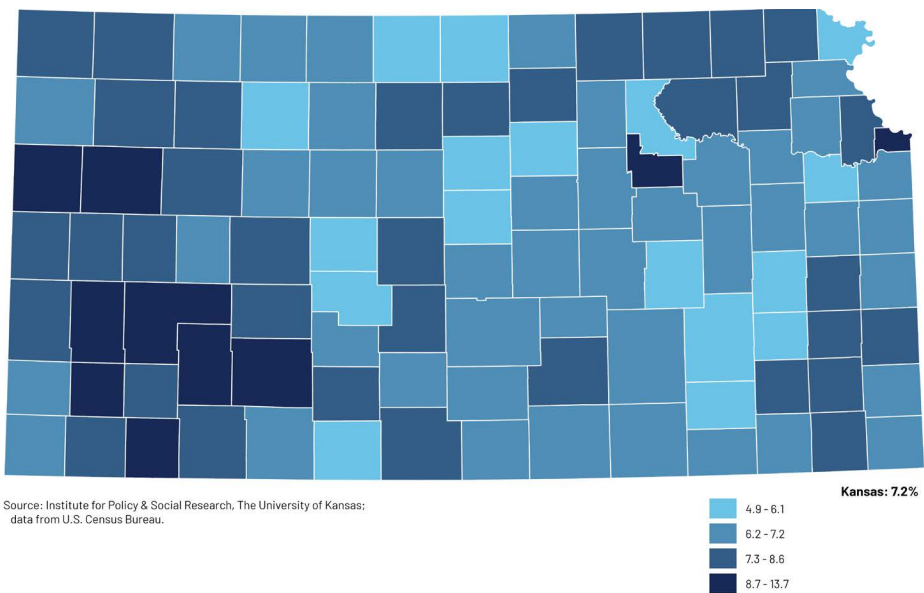
A child’s ability to self-regulate or control their impulses in early childhood can predict their achievement, interpersonal relationships, mental health, and healthy habits in adulthood. *Robson et al., 2020*

Comprehensive supports throughout a child’s first five years of life are highly cost beneficial (Hahn & Barnett, 2023). Because early childhood development is incremental and cumulative, meaning that skills are built upon each other over time, support provided to young children and their families can mitigate the need for more costly interventions across the rest of the lifespan, such as special education and related services, foster care, intensive health care, and incarceration. In other words, investing in comprehensive early childhood services and supports is a cost-effective, long-term solution to improving the lives and well-being of young children and families now and in the future. The state of young Kansans matters because our children today will become the workforce, leaders, neighbors, and parents of tomorrow.

Young children thrive when they experience safe and stable environments, responsive and nurturing child-caregiver relationships, and meaningful learning opportunities that are developmentally appropriate (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2022). Thriving conditions are best supported by multifaceted intervention approaches that directly and indirectly support children and families because all developmental domains are interrelated and all social contexts that children and families interact with mutually influence each other (Britto et al., 2017). In other words, an efficient and effective ecosystem of supports and services is essential for children, families, and communities to thrive (Miller et al., 2022).

To understand how young children might experience their early years, we must first understand general population trends across Kansas and what implications these trends might have on the state now and in the future. An estimated 212,462 children under 6 live in Kansas, which is about 7% of total population of Kansas (U.S. Census Bureau [USCB], 2022b). [Figure 5](#) shows the percentage of children under 6 years of age across Kansas counties.

Figure 5. Percent of Population Under 6 in Kansas By County, 2022

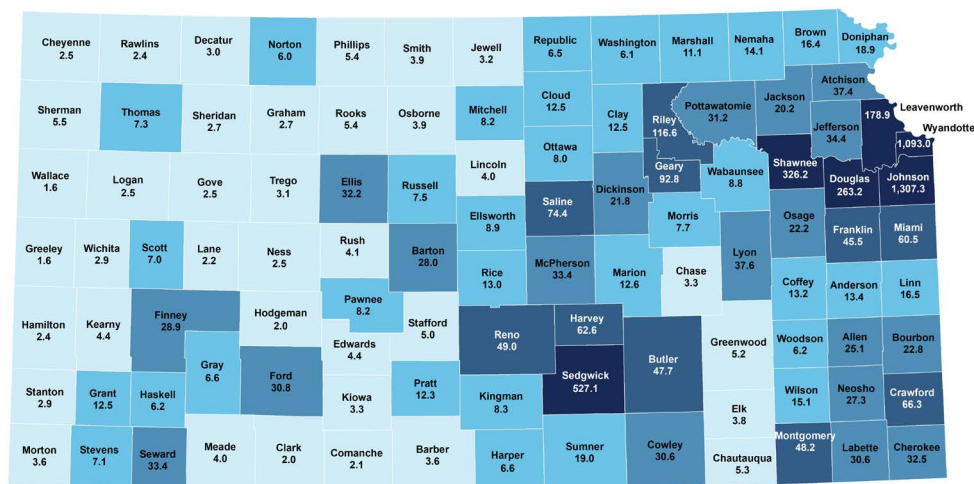


Although the population of children under 6 years old in Kansas is slightly higher than the national average (USCB, 2022b), the overall birth rate in Kansas is declining. According to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE; 2023d), there were a total of 34,376 births to Kansas resident mothers in 2022, which is a slight decrease of 0.9% from 2021. Seven counties, each with over 800 births, accounted for almost 60% of births in 2022: six urban counties (Douglas, Johnson, Leavenworth, Sedgwick, Shawnee, and Wyandotte) and one semi-urban county (Geary). Far more children live in urban, semi-urban, and densely populated rural counties (88.1%) compared to children who live in rural and frontier counties (11.9%; USCB, 2022a), which poses considerable challenges for coordinating and providing high-quality early childhood services and supports that are individualized for each child and their family.

The challenge of relatively small numbers of children dispersed across more space often leads to large geographic service areas with few early intervention, early childhood special education, and other specialized professionals.



Figure 6. Population Density Classifications in Kansas by County, 2022



Source: Institute for Policy & Social Research, The University of Kansas; data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates, Vintage 2022.

**Population Density by Classification*
(persons per square mile)**

- Frontier (less than 6.0 ppsm)
 - Rural (6.1 - 19.9 ppsm)
 - Densely-settled Rural (20.0 - 39.9 ppsm)
 - Semi-Urban (40.0 - 149.9 ppsm)
 - Urban (150.0 or more ppsm)
- * Kansas Department of Health and Environment classifications.

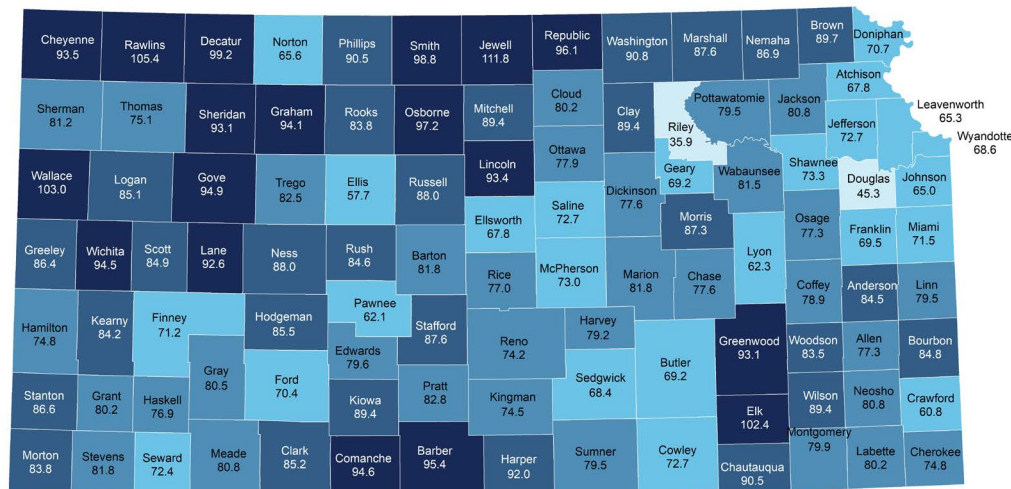
State: 35.9

Table 7. Estimated Number of Children Under 6 by Kansas Region (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a)

Region	General population (Count)	Population of children under 6 (Count)	Total population of children under 6 (%)
Frontier	108,699	7,579	3.6
Rural	249,906	17,538	8.3
Densely Settled Rural	432,858	32,956	15.5
Semi-Urban	454,885	32,052	15.1
Urban	1,690,802	122,337	57.6
Total	2,937,150	212,462	100

The decline in birth rates in Kansas mirrors national trends (Brown, 2021). Although the Kansas birth rate decline from year to year seems relatively small, this gradual decrease adds up over time. The birth rate has markedly decreased by over 17% in the past 15 years (KDHE, 2023d). The drop in the overall birth rate is compounded with declining populations in rural and Western Kansas and an overall aging population (KAC, 2023). A negative population growth rate, in part due to the decreasing birth rate, will impact Kansas in the near future and long-term (KAC, 2023). A decreasing population has serious implications for economic and social well-being in Kansas. Fewer births can lead to a smaller yet more expensive labor market, which can reduce the size and quantity of businesses and industries, as well as number of consumers, contributing to the state's economy (Chapman, 2022). In turn, younger generations with smaller populations relative to older generations may become less productive because the workforce must pivot, at least in part, to caring for an aging population rather than contributing to production for the state, national, or global markets.

Figure 7. Dependent Population per 100 People Age 18 to 64 in Kansas by County, 2022.



Source: Institute for Policy & Social Research, The University of Kansas; data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 Population Estimates.

Dependent population includes people under 18 and over 64.



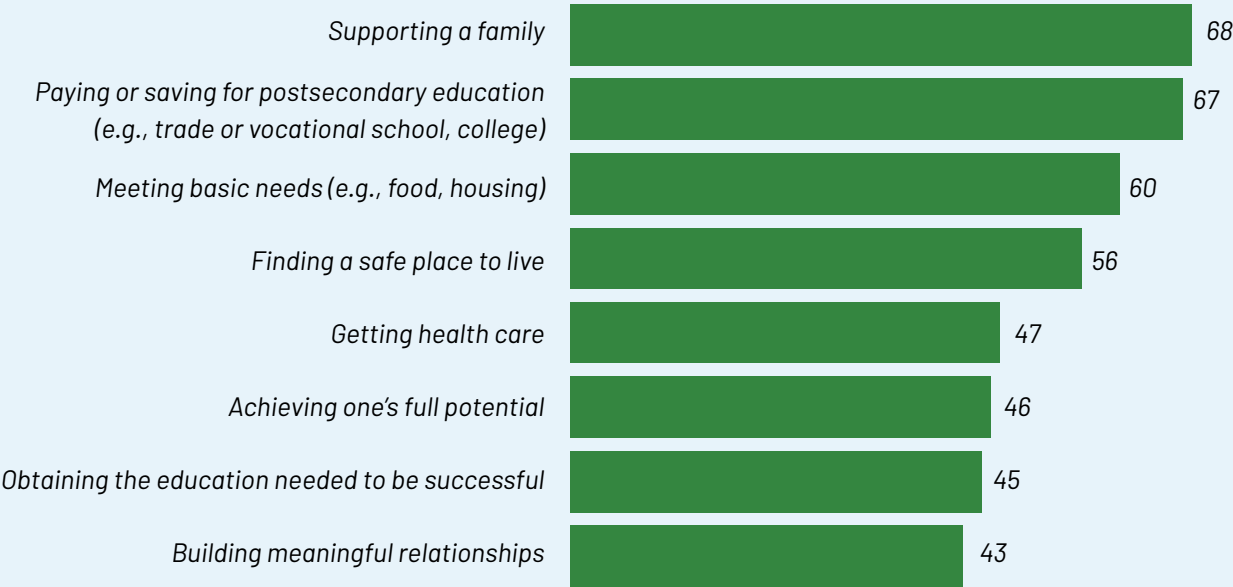
Additionally, fewer births also means that families will be smaller and there will be fewer families over time. Because family members and other relatives often serve as long-term sources of stability, support, and socialization, individuals may become more lonely, isolated, self-interested (Joint Economic Committee, 2022). In the near future and as a single consideration, the declining birth rate may seem nominal, but over time and contextualized with other considerations, a sub-replacement birth rate will drastically decrease the population in Kansas and change industries, businesses, and communities across the state.

There is little data currently available to pinpoint the reason for this decline in Kansas or nationally. However, in a study of almost 10,000 U.S. adults with and without children, more than half (56%) of respondents indicated that they did not want to have more children, or any at all (Brown, 2021). Among study participants aged 18 to 49 who were not parents, almost half (44%) stated that they were unlikely to have children in the future, which is a 7% increase from the 37% of respondents who echoed this

sentiment in the 2018 survey (Brown, 2021). Several reasons influenced the decision to not have children in the future. Some influences include financial (e.g., cost of child care; Brown, 2021; Grose, 2023; Heggeness, 2021) as well as medical reasons (Brown, 2021). Other reasons indicated in the national survey included not having a partner, the current state of the world, and climate change. Perceptions about raising a family in Kansas vary according to age. The Healthy Kansas Community Perceptions survey, which interviewed almost 1,500 Kansans, revealed a correlation between age and perceptions about raising children: Respondents over age 65 had more positive perceptions, while the respondents between ages 18 and 24 had the least positive perceptions (KDHE, 2022c). Although more research is needed to identify specific causes and correlations between a family's context and their choice to not have children in the future, research strongly suggests that families who experience complex challenges are often discouraged from having children.

Figure 8. Kansan Survey Respondents Thinking About Their Future. *n* = 1,426

When Kansans were asked to envision future experiences, a substantial number of survey respondents expressed that the following aspects of life would become more difficult:



KDHE, 2022c

Geography Effects

Families' experiences are largely shaped by where they live and work. As a Midwestern state, Kansas comprises communities that range from urban to frontier, and everything in between. Rural communities in Kansas often support agriculture and related sectors of the economy (Kansas Department of Agriculture [KDA], 2023b). Conversely, urban and semi-urban communities in Kansas often have higher concentrations of corporate manufacturing sectors. Each Kansas community has unique resources, strengths, and challenges based on its geographical location, which influences families' lived experiences.

Almost 90%
of Kansas children live in more populated areas of Kansas. These include urban, semi-urban, and densely settled rural counties. USCB, 2022a

Many Kansas families live near infrastructure and resources necessary to meet basic needs, such as grocery stores, health care providers, and educational settings. However, not all families can afford essentials, such as food and shelter, which can impede family members' attainment of higher-order needs, such as establishing a sense of belonging, developing self-esteem, and contributing to society (Victoria et al., 2022). Families in urban Kansas communities often live in areas considered food deserts that characterize a community's limited access to healthy and affordable food (Kansas Health Institute [KHI], 2022). For example, Central Topeka is considered a food desert with the highest rates of food insecurity (about 29%) and low-income households (about 38%) in Shawnee County (KHI, 2022). Similar patterns have been found in other urban areas, such as Wichita and Kansas City, smaller communities, such as Salina and Dodge City, and frontier regions, such as Elk and Sherman Counties (U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2019). While sufficient income helps families meet their basic needs, there are additional considerations that make families' abilities to meet basic needs more complex and nuanced.

Families who live in rural and urban areas may experience increased—though different—barriers to meeting their basic needs. Families in rural areas of Kansas historically earn lower wages and experience higher rates of poverty (Kansas Children's Cabinet & KU-CPPR, 2017). Additionally, families who live in less populated areas and whose young children require specialized care and supports often experience more gaps in support due to shortages of professionals, resources, and innovations necessary to sustain rural service provision. Families who live in urban areas also experience poverty and barriers meeting basic needs, though their experiences will likely differ from families in rural areas. Urban areas generally have higher concentrations of professionals and resources available to support children and families. However, urban areas often experience high costs of living and basic needs, which requires families to spend more of their income to afford basic needs (Institute of Policy & Research, 2023). Whether families live in rural or urban communities, they can experience unique circumstances because of where they live.

Extreme Weather Effects

Global temperatures continue to climb and 2023 was reported to be the warmest year in history since official records began in 1880 (National Aeronautics and Space Administration [NASA], 2024; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [NOAA], 2024). Across the country, children and families are experiencing more frequent and extreme weather events (Jay et al., 2023). Extreme weather affects early childhood development and health. In particular, Harvard's Early Childhood Scientific Council on Equity and the Environment (2023) highlighted ways in which extreme heat compromises young children's brain and body development, such as poor sleep and learning loss. Short-term developmental outcomes to prolonged extreme heat exposure can result in decreased cognitive and emotional functioning, seizures, muscle deterioration, and a compromised immune system, among others. Over time, these short-term outcomes reduce children's abilities to endure future extreme heat exposure and have lasting effects including increased risk for significant medical conditions, such as heart, liver, and kidney failure.

In Kansas, these events include record-high temperatures, increased risk of drought, and stronger and more prevalent storms (McPherson et al., 2023; National Weather Service, 2023). By 2050, Kansas is expected to have four times as many days over 100 degrees as were recorded in 2016 (KDHE, 2022c). With natural disasters and extreme weather becoming more prevalent, families who earn less than a livable wage are disproportionately affected due to out-of-pocket costs for repairs and possible disruptions to work, school, and transportation (Hallegatte et al., 2020). Kansas children and families will experience these events differently depending on compounding influences, such as family income, location, and race/ethnicity, which will shape their long-term outcomes.

Over the last year, The Early Years Climate Action Task Force, a group of 20 early years leaders, climate leaders, researchers, medical professionals, parents, philanthropists, and others came together to create a plan. They held listening sessions to learn more about the impacts of climate change on young children and explored opportunities to support young children, their families, and the programs that serve them in a context of increasingly severe weather events. The U.S. Early Years Climate Action Plan (Capita & The Aspen Institute, 2023) recommends collaborations among policymakers, early childhood professionals, business, philanthropy, and

researchers to effectively support children and families, child- and family-facing programs, and communities.

Based on these recommendations, state policymakers in Kansas have an opportunity to assess and update resources and tools to determine climate vulnerability and risk to families with young children. State policymakers can also leverage policy to ensure that early childhood programs are prepared to experience extreme weather events and are protected from them when possible. Local policymakers should reach out to families to include them in planning, especially when planning for climate-resilient neighborhoods and spaces. Finally, early childhood professionals should plan for building climate resilience into their services. For example, early childhood administrators should begin to consider the safety and quality of their facilities needed to endure extreme weather events, consider how they will warn and guide children and families during extreme weather events, and integrate training to prepare for this type of disruption into their professional development plans (Early Childhood Scientific Council on Equity and the Environment, 2023; Capita & The Aspen Institute, 2023). Following through with these recommendations can help ensure a future where families will stay and grow in Kansas, despite facing the impacts of extreme weather events.



The Future of Farming and Ranching Families in Kansas

Agriculture and related sectors are central to the Kansas economy and its communities.



87.5%

of Kansas is farmland,
occupying 45,759,319 acres.
KDA, 2023b



Farming crops and livestock
annually earns Kansans an estimated
\$81.2 billion.

KDA, 2023c

253,614

Kansans are
employed by farming.
KDA, 2023c



14%

**of the Gross Regional
Product** is produced
by Kansas farms.
KDA, 2023c



With cattle and grains as the
most common products raised
and grown in Kansas, **the state's
agriculture production is also
crucial to national and global
markets and societies.** *KDA, 2023a*



84.6%

of agriculture production
in Kansas is **family-owned
and family-operated.**

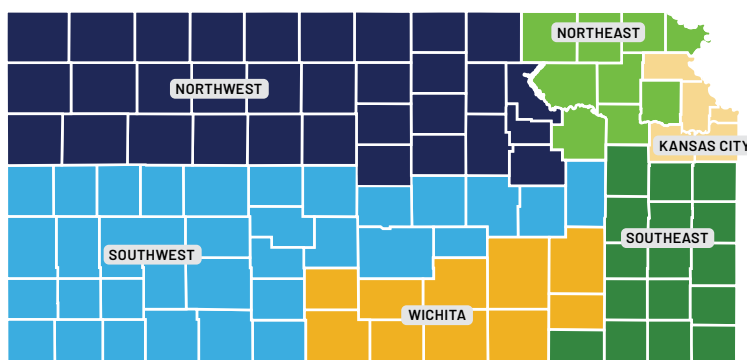
USDA, 2019

Families are the backbone of agriculture production in Kansas. A majority (84.6%) of production is family-owned and -operated, but Kansas farmers are an average age of 58 (U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2019). Farming families function best when they have established connections and trust within their family units, which contribute to their short-term productivity and intergenerational succession (Bell, 2019). However, geographical barriers that uniquely interfere with rural families meeting their basic needs, such as inaccessible or unavailable child care and health care, can detract from families' farming production. Additionally, agriculture-related occupations often experience a variety of stressors, such as unpredictable weather, heavy workloads, and financial burdens, which can take a toll on individual and family mental health and well-being. To support positive outcomes for farmers, ranchers, and their families, [Kansas Ag Stress Resources](#) brings awareness to these unique challenges and offers a range of supports. Despite available supports, the reality is that farmers and ranchers are almost twice as likely to die by suicide compared to other occupations (Peterson et al., 2020).

Rural farming and ranching families are essential to the Kansas economy and its communities, yet face complex challenges due to their geography and occupational conditions. With negative population growth rates influenced by birth rates, an aging population, and out-of-state migration (KAC, 2023), there is growing concern for the future of rural farming and ranching families in Kansas. Over the next few decades, the declining birth rate, limited resources in rural communities, and increasing occupational challenges may converge in ways that make farming and ranching families scarce in Kansas. A comprehensive early childhood ecosystem can implement innovative solutions to provide high-quality child care and health care in ways that improve the lives of children and families in rural Kansas, as well as the Kansas economy as a whole.

Regional Profiles

While most of the findings of this Needs Assessment are applicable throughout the state, **regional and community variations shape how families access and experience services.** Drawing on data from the Distinct Count of Children Data Dashboard and other publicly available sources, we compiled key indicators by Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) regions into profiles to help contextualize experiences of Kansas families with young children as they vary across regions.



Out of the six DCF regions, four regions had populations between 269,000 to 377,000 and contained most of the state's rural and frontier counties. The Kansas City and Wichita regions were the most populated at about three- and two-times as many people as other regions, respectively. Across all regions, the population of children under age 6 was generally proportionate, making up about 7% of the total population. In each region, unduplicated counts of children who participated in services across the early childhood ecosystem ranged from about one-third to one-half of all children. Kansas City and Wichita were two of the three regions with the lowest percentages of children served by the early childhood ecosystem.

Families' access to health care professionals differed across regions. For example, health care professionals in the Northwest, Southwest, Southeast, and Northeast regions were scarce, ranging from 16 to 36 pediatricians and three to nine doulas per region. Across all regions, most pediatricians and doulas congregated in counties with relatively dense populations. In three regions, more than half of the region's pediatricians were in a single county. At least one-third to one-half each region's doulas were in a single county.

The population of Kansans who lived below 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL) ranged from 11% to 13.7% across all regions except for Kansas City with 8.8%. The national rate of the population experiencing poverty was 11.5% (USCB, 2023b). Although proportionately more households in the Kansas City area lived above the FPL, costs for basic needs were often higher in urban and semi-urban areas. Rates of single mothers with young children, children enrolled in nursery/preschool, and children enrolled in kindergarten who lived below 100% FPL were consistent across regions, making up about 0.1% to 0.3% of each regional population.

The regional profiles on the following pages display data related to key demographics, the number of children served by the early childhood system, community resources, and poverty. Data sources and source notes are provided in the box below.

Sources/Notes

Key Demographic/Poverty Indicators Indicators are estimates that represent the most recent available data collected between 2018 and 2022 for the American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau.

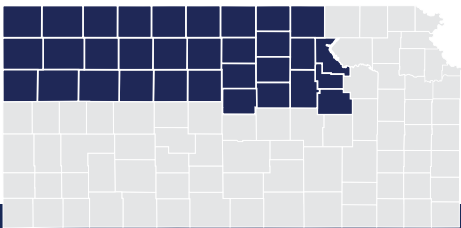
Children Served by the Early Childhood System Numbers were based on 2023 data provided by the the Kansas Distinct Count of Children Data Dashboard. Region-level counts of children served by the early childhood system and children served in child care, home visiting, and Part C programs are provided for each region. Region-level data were limited for children served in PreK and were excluded from these counts.

Parks Numbers were based on data collected in 2018 by openICPSR National Neighborhood Data Archive (NaNDA).

Farmers Markets Numbers were based on data collected in 2018 by USDA ERS Food Environment Atlas.

Pediatricians/Midwives and Doulas Numbers were based on data collected in 2022 by National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES).

NORTHWEST REGION



Key Demographics

Total population	Households with children under 18	Children under 6	Women in the workforce who have given birth in the last year
331,980	37,834	24,872	2,781

Children Served by the Early Childhood System

All services 48.6% of children under 6	Child care	Home visiting	Part C
12,087	8,404	1,535	1,532

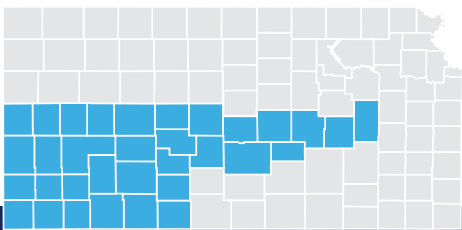
Community Resources

	 Parks	 Farmers markets	 Pediatricians	 Midwives & doulas
Total	134	24	30	9
Minimum/county	0	0	0	0
Maximum/county	24	3	15	3

Poverty Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

People living below 100% FPL		Regional population count	Percent of regional population
13.7%	Indicator		
	Single mothers below 100% FPL with children under 5	895	0.3%
Households receiving SNAP (Food Stamps)	Children below 100% FPL enrolled in nursery or preschool	937	0.3%
17,301	Children below 100% FPL enrolled in kindergarten	678	0.2%

SOUTHWEST REGION



Key Demographics

Total population	Households with children under 18	Children under 6	Women in the workforce who have given birth in the last year
376,009	44,336	28,813	3,567

Children Served by the Early Childhood System

All services 37.3% of children under 6	Child care	Home visiting	Part C
10,748	7,412	1,431	1,632

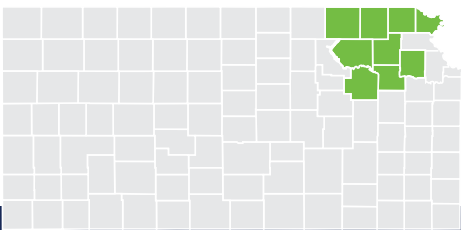
Community Resources

				
	Parks	Farmers markets	Pediatricians	Midwives & doulas
Total	169	23	35	6
Minimum/county	0	0	0	0
Maximum/county	27	3	9	2

Poverty Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

People living below 100% FPL		Regional population count	Percent of regional population
11.4%	Indicator		
	Single mothers below 100% FPL with children under 5	1,108	0.3%
Households receiving SNAP (Food Stamps)	Children below 100% FPL enrolled in nursery or preschool	625	0.2%
39,046	Children below 100% FPL enrolled in kindergarten	643	0.2%

NORTHEAST REGION



Key Demographics

Total population	Households with children under 18	Children under 6	Women in the workforce who have given birth in the last year
279,910	32,581	20,560	2,343

Children Served by the Early Childhood System

All services 48% of children under 6	Child care	Home visiting	Part C
9,870	6,307	1,693	1,335

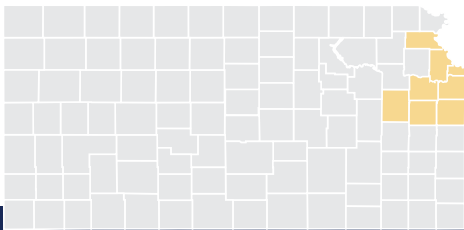
Community Resources

	 Parks	 Farmers markets	 Pediatricians	 Midwives & doulas
Total	144	13	36	6
Minimum/county	0	0	0	0
Maximum/county	105	6	35	3

Poverty Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

People living below 100% FPL		Regional population count	Percent of regional population
11.0%	Indicator		
	Single mothers below 100% FPL with children under 5	496	0.2%
Households receiving SNAP (Food Stamps)	Children below 100% FPL enrolled in nursery or preschool	266	0.1%
5,696	Children below 100% FPL enrolled in kindergarten	475	0.2%

KANSAS CITY METRO REGION



Key Demographics

Total population	Households with children under 18	Children under 6	Women in the workforce who have given birth in the last year
996,184	121,999	73,486	9,363

Children Served by the Early Childhood System

All services 41.3% of children under 6	Child care	Home visiting	Part C
30,367	23,309	3,341	3,707

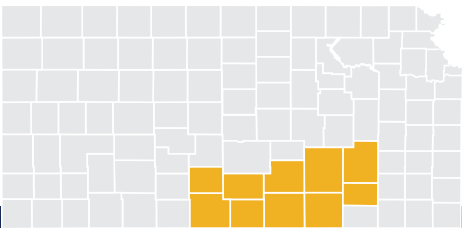
Community Resources

	 Parks	 Farmers markets	 Pediatricians	 Midwives & doulas
Total	584	22	186	35
Minimum/county	12	1	0	1
Maximum/county	386	9	111	18

Poverty Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

People living below 100% FPL		Regional population count	Percent of regional population
8.8%	Indicator		
	Single mothers below 100% FPL with children under 5	1,624	0.2%
Households receiving SNAP (Food Stamps)	Children below 100% FPL enrolled in nursery or preschool	1,307	0.1%
936	Children below 100% FPL enrolled in kindergarten	1,308	0.1%

WICHITA REGION



Key Demographics

Total population	Households with children under 18	Children under 6	Women in the workforce who have given birth in the last year
682,032	82,720	51,521	6,570

Children Served by the Early Childhood System

All services 33.2% of children under 6	Child care	Home visiting	Part C
17,127	13,030	1,586	2,433

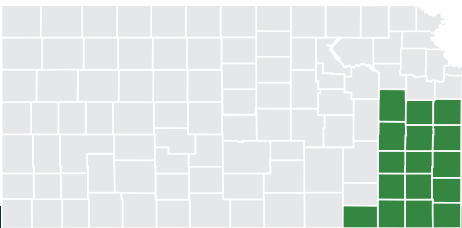
Community Resources

				
	Parks	Farmers markets	Pediatricians	Midwives & doulas
Total	340	18	159	18
Minimum/county	0	0	0	0
Maximum/county	255	8	154	16

Poverty Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

People living below 100% FPL		Regional population count	Percent of regional population
12.8%	Indicator		
	Single mothers below 100% FPL with children under 5	1,437	0.2%
Households receiving SNAP (Food Stamps)	Children below 100% FPL enrolled in nursery or preschool	1,421	0.2%
4,797	Children below 100% FPL enrolled in kindergarten	1,270	0.2%

SOUTHEAST REGION



Key Demographics

Total population	Households with children under 18	Children under 6	Women in the workforce who have given birth in the last year
269,807	31,145	19,320	1,885

Children Served by the Early Childhood System

All services 42.4% of children under 6	Child care	Home visiting	Part C
8,196	5,096	1,927	952

Community Resources

	Parks	Farmers markets	Pediatricians	Midwives & doulas
Total	106	19	16	3
Minimum/county	0	0	0	0
Maximum/county	16	3	7	2

Poverty Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

People living below 100% FPL		Regional population count	Percent of regional population
13.3%	Indicator		
	Single mothers below 100% FPL with children under 5	509	0.2%
Households receiving SNAP (Food Stamps)	Children below 100% FPL enrolled in nursery or preschool	763	0.3%
12,081	Children below 100% FPL enrolled in kindergarten	511	0.2%

Findings

Meeting Basic Needs

Meeting basic needs is essential for children and families—and all Kansans—to live meaningful lives and contribute to society. Basic needs include food, housing, health care, child care, transportation, technology, and other unanticipated living costs.

In Kansas, 39% of households cannot afford to meet their basic needs: 12% of households live at or below 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL), which is less than \$30,000 annual income for a family of four, and an additional 27% of households earn above 100% FPL but still struggle to afford at least some of their basic needs (United for ALICE, 2023). [Table 8](#) provides an overview of FPL income thresholds on family size in 2023. Although a family of four earning a \$50,000 annual income lives above 100% FPL, the availability and cost of basic needs shapes the family’s ability to meet these needs. Where Kansans live influences

how much their basic needs cost (KDHE, 2022c). [Table 9](#) provides an overview of children who live below 100% FPL across each type of geographic region in Kansas.

Table 8. 2023 Federal Poverty Guidelines at 100% Federal Poverty Level by Family Size. HHS, 2023

Family Size	Annual Pre-Tax Income
1	\$14,580
2	\$19,720
3	\$24,860
4	\$30,000
5	\$35,140

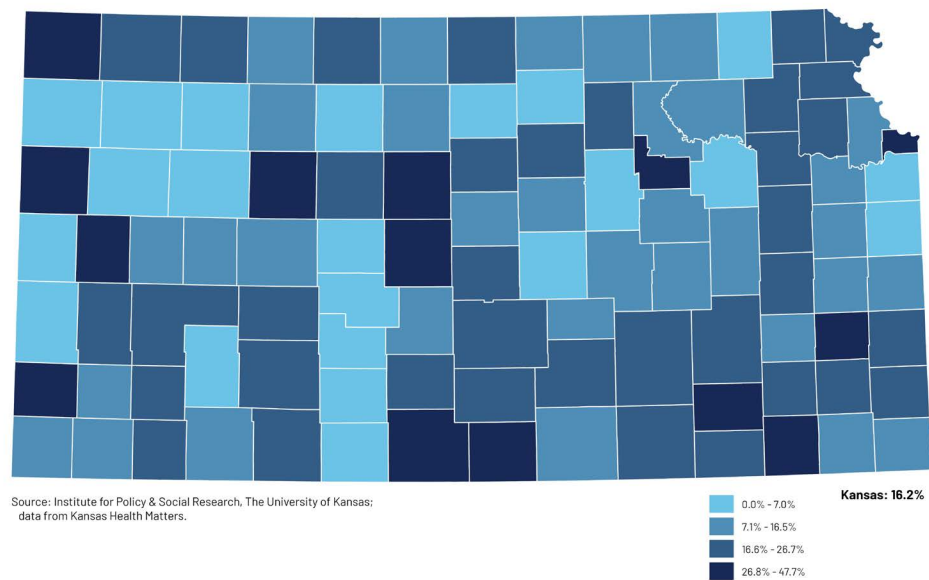
Note: Add \$5,140 for each extra person.

Table 9. Children Whose Families Live Below 100% Federal Poverty Level by Region. USCB, 2022a

Region	Total children under 6 who live below 100% FPL	Percentage of children under 6 who live below 100% FPL in Region
Frontier	1,173	3.4%
Rural	2,548	7.4%
Densely Settled Rural	6,309	18.3%
Semi-Urban	5,948	17.4%
Urban	18,449	53.6%
Total	34,427	100.0%

Note. A family of four who lives at 100% FPL earned an annual income of \$30,000 in 2023 (HHS, 2023).

Figure 9. Percent of Children Under 5 in Poverty in Kansas by County, 2017-2021



Kansas families who live in urban counties may earn higher wages, leading to higher annual income, but they may experience higher cost of living in more densely populated areas compared to rural locales. Take differences between the costs of living in Wyandotte (urban) and Ottawa (rural) Counties for example: Wyandotte County's median household annual income in 2021 was \$52,366, which was about 6.3% higher than Ottawa County's median household annual income of \$49,250 (USCB, 2022a). However, the fair market rent rate, which includes the cost of shelter plus utilities per month, for a three-bedroom unit considered safe and suitable for living was \$1,530 in Wyandotte County, which was almost 50% more than the fair market rent rate of \$1,022 for equivalent shelter and utilities in Ottawa County (USCB, 2022a). In other words, the spending-to-income ratio may differ for each family across Kansas because where they live influences the cost of goods, services, and basic needs.

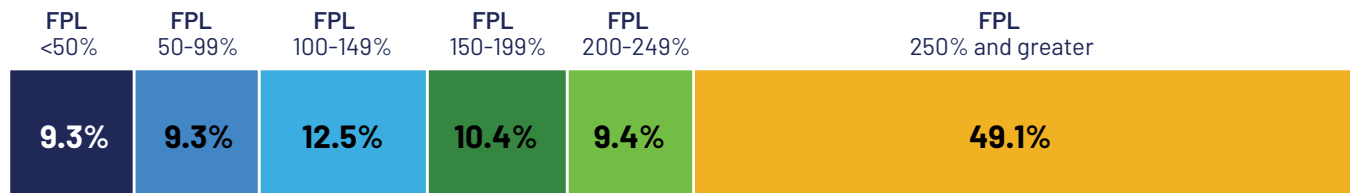
Though the cost of living varies from one Kansas community to another, there is one constant across the state: the minimum hourly wage in Kansas is \$7.25 (Kansas Department of Labor [KDOL], 2023). Minimum wage does not equate to a livable income even when

working full-time in 2023. Instead, a livable wage for a family of four with two parents working full-time is \$23.24 per hour per working parent (Glasmeier, 2023). A survival budget for a family with two adults, one infant, and one preschool-aged child in Kansas requires a combined hourly wage of \$27.40 (United for ALICE, 2023), which is nearly double the income that two adults would earn working full-time at minimum wage. Increasing costs of living while raising young children create persistent, interrelated challenges for many Kansas families.

Almost 20%
of children under age 6 across
all geographic regions in Kansas
live below 100% FPL.

50.9% of Kansas children
live in families who struggle
to afford at least some of their
basic needs. USCB, 2022a

Figure 10. Over Half of Kansas Children Under 6 Live Below 250% FPL. USCB, 2022a



Living at or below the poverty level, which is less than \$30,000 for a family of four, is disparately experienced across racial and ethnic categories. According to data from 2022 synthesized from the American Community Surveys, the poverty rate for Black (20.7%) and Hispanic (20.6%) Kansans was double the rate of White Kansans (10%; KFF, 2023a). Kansans categorized in the dataset as American Indian/Alaska Native (17.6%) and Multiple Races (16.4%) also experienced higher poverty rates, whereas Kansans who identified as Asian/Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (9.8%) experienced slightly lower poverty rates compared to Kansas who were White (KFF, 2023a).

Table 10. Percentage of Kansas Population by Race/Ethnicity and Region. USCB, 2022b

Race/ethnicity	Frontier	Rural	Densely Settled Rural	Semi-Urban	Urban	Total Kansas
Hispanic, any race	16.3%	13.3%	29.0%	14.5%	20.2%	20.0%
White alone	92.5%	91.9%	88.1%	82.5%	76.0%	80.8%
Black or African American only	1.1%	1.3%	2.8%	5.6%	10.5%	7.5%
Native American only	1.1%	1.8%	1.9%	1.2%	1.1%	1.3%
Asian or Pacific Islander only	0.5%	0.6%	1.6%	2.4%	4.7%	3.4%
Two or more races	4.8%	4.5%	5.5%	8.4%	7.7%	7.1%

Note. Total percentages by region exceed 100% due to data collection and measurement limitations. The U.S. Census Bureau considers "Hispanic, any race" an ethnicity, which differs from race. Regional totals add up to 100% +/- 0.1% based on racial category percentages.

Families of color with young children disproportionately experience barriers in their daily lives. For example, Indigenous and Black families in Kansas are more likely to have higher spending-to-income ratios and be labeled with disabilities compared to White families (USCB, 2022a). Kansas children of color are also disproportionately represented in the child welfare system, where Black and Indigenous children are overrepresented at nearly twice the rate of White children in foster care (DCF, 2021). These disparities suggest that access to basic needs, such as food, housing, and health care, is even more limited for Kansans of color.

When a family's basic needs are unmet, all family members can experience distress, including children (Sojourner, 2023; Stanford Center on Early Childhood, 2023; United for ALICE, 2023). When parents and caregivers experience high stress levels, they often experience challenges engaging in warm, responsive interactions and relationships with their children (Fields et al., 2021). Because children's early years set the foundation for their social-emotional development, which includes skills needed to engage in emotional regulation and interpersonal connections, positive attachment to family members is essential for young children (Doyle & Cicchetti, 2017). Positive interactions and relationships in early childhood contribute to positive long-term outcomes, whereas negative or absent interactions and relationships in early childhood can have the opposite effect. For these reasons, meeting the family's basic needs is foundational to early learning, which leads to improved long-term outcomes for children and families.



Food and Nutrition

While all basic needs function together in complex ways that shape children and families' lived experiences, food and nutrition are perhaps the most essential

needs because they sustain human life. Food insecurity is connected to poorer quality diet, which can lead children and families to experience persistent health challenges, such as hypertension and diabetes, overall poorer health, and lower quality of life compared to those who have food security and nutritious diet (Keith-Jennings et al., 2019).

Access to healthful food improves one's ability to meet other basic needs related to health (Bitler & Seifoddini, 2019) and housing (Lee et al., 2021). Because basic needs are interrelated, they have compounding effects on experiences of children and families over time. For example, food security coupled with housing stability positively contribute to adolescent mental health, whereas challenges accessing one or both of these basic needs can negatively impact adolescent mental health (Hatem et al., 2020). More broadly, food security facilitates immediate benefits, such as decreased hospitalizations and school absences based on monthly counts, as well as long-term benefits, such as lower crime rates and increased educational attainment and lifetime earnings based on cohort and longitudinal studies (Bitler & Seifoddini, 2019). Adequate food and nutrition are essential for positive outcomes across the lifespan.

Benefit programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provide eligible individuals and families with financial assistance to obtain food and nutrition. These programs promote food security via ongoing support to qualifying families, freeing up some of families' net income to be reallocated to attain other basic needs. On average, 10.2% of Kansas households were food insecure between 2019-2021 (USDA, 2022). Single women and men headed households in Kansas are experiencing a higher rate of food insecurity (29% and 15%, respectively) than the national average (KDHE, 2022c). The most recent available data indicates that about 95,000 Kansas households participated in food assistance programs during fiscal year 2023, which included about 107,000 adults and 83,000 children (DCF, 2023b).

Food security in Kansas has improved at statistically significant rates, both recently and in the past decade: Overall, the number of Kansas households considered to be experiencing "low" or "very low" food insecurity has been minimized by about one-quarter from 12.5% during 2017-19 to 9.6% during 2020-22, which is nearly one-third lower than a decade prior when the food insecurity rate was 14.4% during 2010-12 (Rabbitt et al., 2023). While a lower food insecurity rate is encouraging, there may be upcoming challenges ensuring that these needs are met because many COVID-19-era policies that provided increased benefits over the past few years, such as emergency SNAP allotments, have ended due to the expiration of the public health emergency status. Somewhat offsetting the overall loss of benefits from COVID-19 response programs, SNAP's annual inflation adjustment has slightly increased due to increased food costs (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities [CBPP], 2023). Ongoing, proactive support is necessary to ensure that children and families can meet their food and nutrition needs because these are interconnected to broader aspects of Kansas.

Fulfillment of children and families' basic needs of food and nutrition also sustains the Kansas economy. Because SNAP benefits are dedicated to food purchases, they support the food supply chain, which includes farmers, processors, distributors, and retailers. More than 2,000 food retailers accept SNAP benefits in Kansas (USDA, 2022). With recurring monthly disbursements, food assistance program participants generate a substantial amount of revenue for Kansas businesses: An average of \$21 million in SNAP benefits were issued each month in Kansas in fiscal year 2020 (USDA, 2022).

Kansas families are also experiencing some financial relief through a three-year plan to completely eliminate state sales tax on grocery purchases (Kansas Office of the Governor, 2023c). From a starting point of 6.5%, incremental decreases began in 2023 with a lower tax rate of 4%, which reduced to 2% in 2024.



In 2025, the state sales tax on grocery purchases will be removed.

This year's reduction to the 2% rate will save Kansans a collective \$150 million in 2024. Saving families money on purchases to meet their basic needs can make a significant difference in their ability to meet their basic needs and improve their overall quality of life. Additionally, when families can financially meet their basic needs, their purchasing power boosts their community and state.

Housing

Children whose families have access to safe, affordable housing experience better health and well-being outcomes because they are more likely to access nutritious food, positive family interactions, and consistent living environments (Maqbool et al., 2015). However, housing is becoming more unaffordable for more families in Kansas.

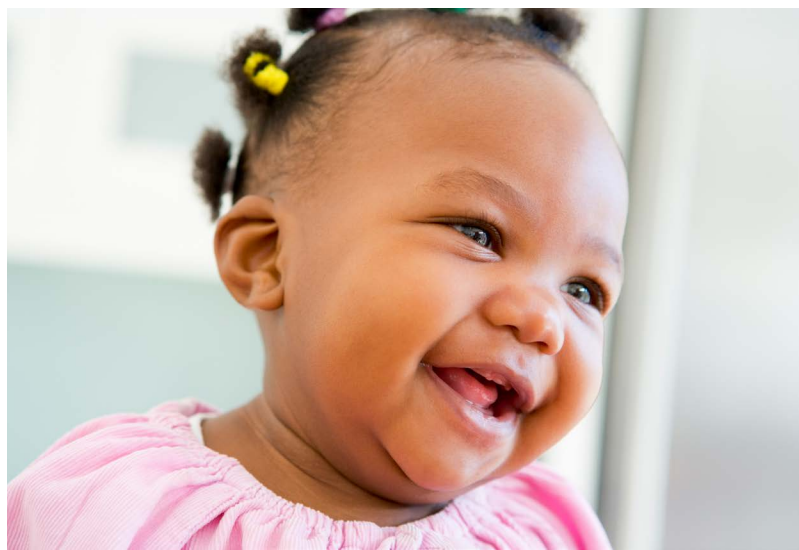
With rising costs of homes and interest rates making homeownership unaffordable for many Kansas families, most families are renters out of necessity, not because they do not want to be homeowners, but because they simply cannot afford to be homeowners. To illustrate, Kansas households earning less than \$75,000 annual income are more likely to rent than own a home, which is a gap that becomes more prominent as household income decreases (KAC, 2022). Although homeownership has long been challenging for many families to attain, especially families earning lower incomes, the prospect of renting is now a growing challenge.

Almost one in four Kansas households experience housing cost burdens that equate to spending 30% or more of a household's income on housing (mySidewalk, 2023). Out of all Kansas households earning less than \$75,000 annual income, renters are almost three times more likely to experience excessive monthly housing costs compared to homeowners (KAC, 2022). Housing costs are increasing

for renters, but wages and incomes remain stagnant, requiring families to spend larger percentages of their income on housing compared to families with higher incomes (KAC, 2022).

Over the past decade, the percentage of renters considered cost burdened increased in 61 Kansas counties (Kansas Housing Resources Corporation [KHRC] et al., 2021). Today, every two in five Kansas renters experience excessive housing costs (mySidewalk, 2023). In 2023, a family of four that earned 100% FPL earned less than two-thirds of the estimated annual income of \$46,645 needed to afford a three-bedroom apartment in Kansas (HHS, 2023; National Low Income Housing Coalition [NLIHC], 2023). A Kansan working full-time at minimum wage cannot afford a two-bedroom apartment (KAC, 2022). Consequently, families may find temporary or long-term shelter in low-quality housing and/or have more family members sharing less space, which can adversely affect young children's health and development along with other negative family outcomes (Maqbool et al., 2015).

Rural communities experience unique housing challenges. Housing stock in rural Kansas is aging, and many rural counties have over 20% of houses considered in poor condition (KHRC et al., 2021). Rural areas are more likely to experience depressed housing values compared to more densely populated communities, which often makes new construction less incentivizing in rural areas, contributing to a shortage of safe, affordable housing. Moreover, homelessness increased during the pandemic and now 18% of the nation's unhoused population is in rural communities (Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2023). With families who live in rural communities earning relatively lower wages and having fewer and lower-quality housing options available, they are more likely to experience greater food insecurity and limited access to health care (Maqbool et al., 2015).





Health Care

As of January 1, 2024, Kansas remains one of 10 states, including Washington, D. C., that has not expanded Medicaid eligibility under the Affordable Care Act (KFF, 2023b).

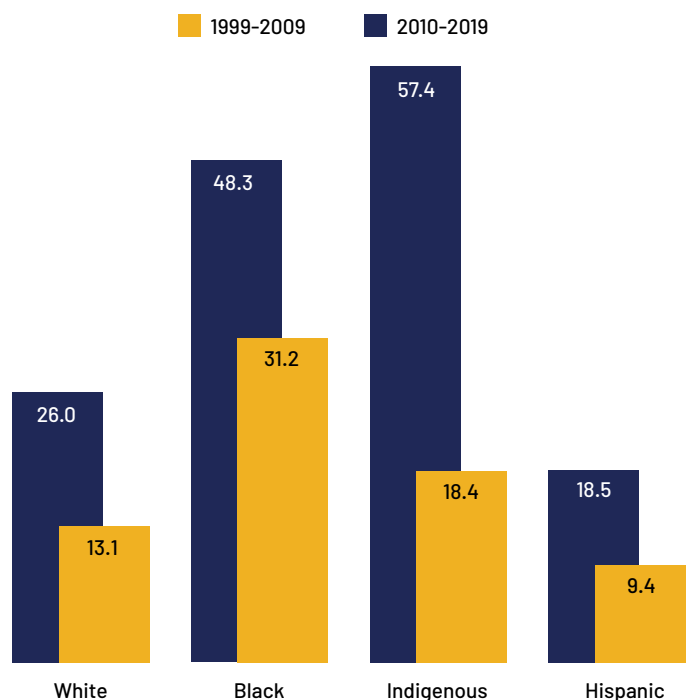
In 2014, the Kansas legislature passed H.B. 2552, which requires legislative approval before the state can adopt and implement Medicaid expansion. In the 2023 Legislative Session, Kansas legislature introduced two bills, H.B. 2415 and S.B. 225, to expand Medicaid coverage to adults with incomes at or below 138% FPL, which equates to \$41,400 annual income for a family of four. However, no proposed legislation moved forward before the session adjourned in April 2023. Today, an estimated 82,000 uninsured Kansans would become eligible for Medicaid if the state opted to expand public health care coverage, which could reduce the uninsured rate by about one-third (PN-3, 2023). Unfortunately, without increasing the income threshold for Medicaid enrollment, Kansans are essentially incentivized to not enter the workforce because the cost to pay for health insurance with earned wages is more expensive than it is to remain unemployed and qualify for Medicare and other benefits (Tipirneni et al., 2022). In September 2023, the national uninsured rate (7.9%) for health care reached its lowest level since the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. USCB, 2023

Though the uninsured rate in Kansas (8.6%) was slightly higher than the national average, fewer Kansans were uninsured in 2022 compared to 2021 (9.2%; USCB, 2023a). While the state's uninsured rate is slightly improving, nearly one-quarter of a million (247,000) Kansans were still uninsured in 2022. However, the uninsured rate may begin to increase when some Kansans are disenrolled from Medicaid due to federal funding changes in 2023. Particularly, the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) increased funding during the pandemic to ensure continuous Medicaid enrollment, but CMS directed states redetermine Medicaid eligibility of enrollees in April 2023, putting thousands of Kansans at risk of disenrollment. Estimated risks are higher in some areas and among racial and ethnic minorities (KHI, 2023), groups with already lower insurance rates. Kansans who were Hispanic (20.1%) and Black (10.5%) were disproportionately uninsured compared to Kansans who were White (6.3%; USCB, 2023b).

Disproportionately negative experiences and outcomes for communities of color are not limited to uninsured health care rates in Kansas. Regardless of socioeconomic status, research shows that families of color also experience disproportionately negative health care outcomes, particularly surrounding maternal and child health (Howland et al., 2019; Mehra et al., 2020; Vilda et al., 2019). Nationally, Black and Indigenous women have higher rates of pregnancy-related death compared to White women, which further increased for Black women during the pandemic (Hill et al., 2022). Similarly, Black and Indigenous infants have markedly higher mortality rates than infants born to White women. Nationally and in Kansas, maternal mortality rates have increased among all racial/ethnic groups over the past two decades (Fleszar et al., 2023).

Over the past two decades in Kansas, maternal mortality rates have doubled for White and Hispanic women and tripled for Indigenous women (Fleszar et al., 2023). Maternal mortality rates for Black women were twice that of White women two decades ago and remain roughly the same proportion today. Black and Indigenous women in Kansas now experience significantly higher maternal mortality rates than mothers who are White.

Figure 11.
Kansas Maternal Mortality Rates
Per 100,000 Population.
Fleszar et al., 2023

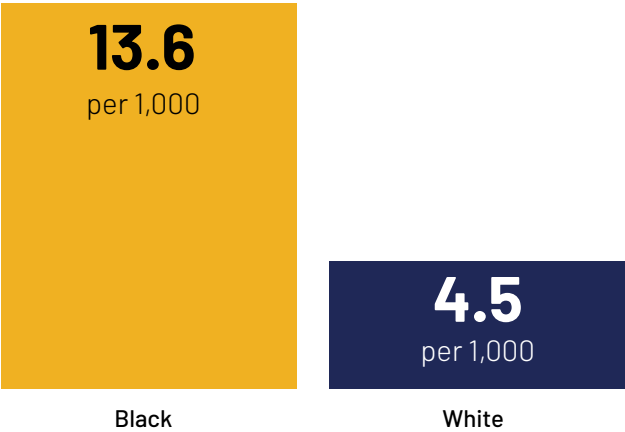


Despite these significant health care disparities in Kansas, research-based practices do exist to better support pregnant and birthing women of color. To illustrate, a study conducted with women of color, who received community-based pre- and perinatal services provided to families with low-income in San Francisco, identified that supports can improve by fostering patient-provider relationship-building and trust in a safe space (Altman et al., 2020). Prenatal and postpartum supports for families of color, such as group prenatal care and community-based doula programs, actively promote the adequate and dignified health care for women of color, ultimately improving outcomes for mothers, children, and families of color (e.g., Abshire et al., 2019; Earnshaw et al., 2016; Mallick et al., 2022). Despite the growing research base for these health care practices that support families of color, Kansas has not yet established statewide group prenatal care or community-based doula programs (PN-3, 2023). Some counties and communities across Kansas, including Douglas County, Wichita, and the Kansas City Metro area, are engaging in efforts to improve prenatal and postpartum supports.

Disproportionate experiences based on race extend beyond pregnancy-related maternal deaths and are acutely experienced by Black women and babies. In Kansas, the preterm birth rate for Black women in Kansas (almost 15%) is about 1.5 times higher than all other birthing women in Kansas (about 10%; March of Dimes, 2023). Similarly, the infant mortality rate among Black infants (13.6 per 1,000 births) is three times higher than White infants (4.5 per 1,000 births), which has been a consistent trend for more than two decades (KDHE, 2022a).

Figure 12.
Infant mortality rate per 1,000 births.

KDHE, 2022a



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Prenatal and Postpartum Support Programs



Mi Apoyo Prenatal, Spanish for “my prenatal support,” provides care coordination/ case management, prenatal education, and parent support for uninsured pregnant women in Douglas County. In 2023, Mi Apoyo Prenatal assisted 154 caregivers by locating low-cost or free prenatal care, helping with enrollment documents, and providing interpretation services for families during health care appointments.



Doulas of Douglas County aims to bring together a group of community-based doulas who can provide doula and breastfeeding support, childbirth education for women of color, as well as infant and toddler child care services to families who seek assistance.

Uzazi Village, a non-profit organization in the Kansas City area, aims to reduce maternal and infant health disparities for women of color and their families by providing a variety of services, including education, doula training and workforce development, doula support for families, and advocacy.

The Kansas Birth Justice Society in Wichita supports maternal and infant health care and reproductive justice by developing a diverse workforce of pregnancy, birth, and early childhood professionals that provide community-based care.

Data indicate an urgent need to improve maternal and child health care for all, with particular emphasis indicated for Black and Indigenous women and children.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

Kansas Initiatives to Address Disparities

Although we have a long road ahead, several cross-sector early childhood initiatives are underway to address maternal health disparities in Kansas:

- **\$1,170,233 to KDHE for the State Maternal Health Innovation Program**, which will establish a maternal health task force to improve the collection and use of state-level data on maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity.
- **\$309,258 to Kansas University Medical Center for the Maternity Care Nursing Workforce Expansion (MatCare) Training Program**, which will strengthen the nurse midwifery workforce through trainee scholarships, stipends, curriculum enhancement, and community-based training.
- **\$3,750,000 to KDHE and state and local partners over the next five years to continue the Kansas Connecting Communities (KCC) collaborative initiative**, which builds provider capacity through training and consultation for OB/GYNs, Certified Nurse Midwives, and other maternal care providers to improve the mental health and well-being of pregnant and postpartum women through increased screening, timely assessment, effective referrals, and reducing barriers to accessing treatment.
- **\$200,000 to KDHE for Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health (AIM) State Capacity** to support safe maternal care to reduce several maternal death in hospitals and birthing centers.



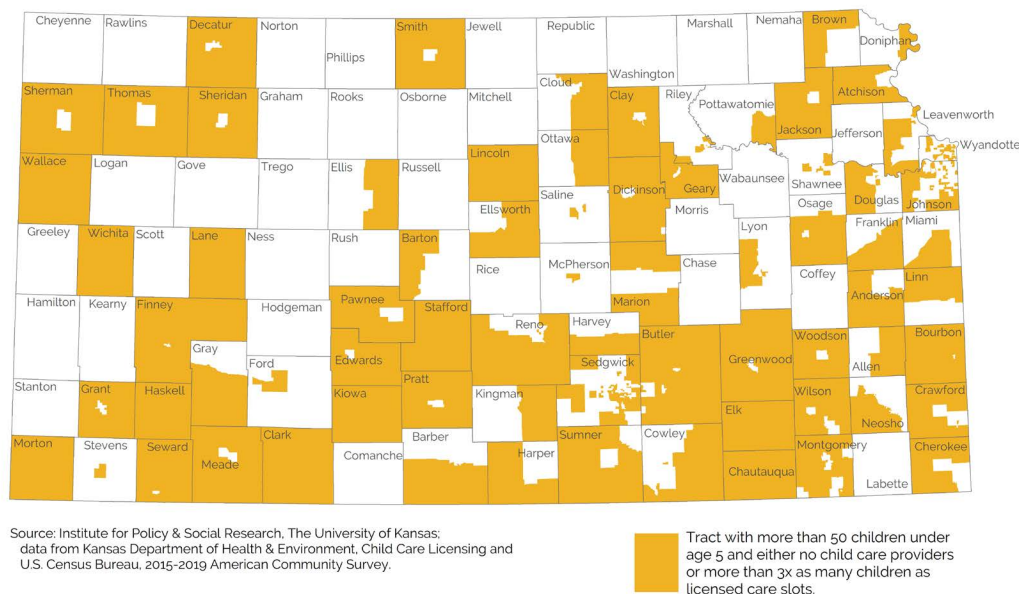
Child Care

Child care provides family members with designated time to fulfill obligations to their family, such as work and self-care, and community, such as contributing to the

Kansas workforce and economy (Heggeness et al., 2024). Access to affordable child care ensures that children's basic needs can be met, such as eating and sleeping, while also facilitating early learning and development through play. Because of the crucial development that takes place during children's early years, families need to trust whoever is caring for their children. Families also need to have child care that is reliable so that they can participate in the workforce, but many families across the state experience unreliable child care. In a study of 770 Kansas families representative of the state's population conducted by Wichita State University's Center for Applied Research and Evaluation (CARE) Public Policy and Management Center (PPMC) in partnership with the Department for Children and Families (DCF), almost one-third (31%) of respondents were unable to work full-time and another quarter (26%) of respondents unable to work part-time due to lack of reliable child care.

There are over 4,500 licensed child care programs in Kansas, which include public and private home-, center-, and school-based programs (KDHE, 2023f). However, estimated child care capacity across Kansas in 2023 only met about 44% of the current demand, with an estimated 84,742 additional slots needed (CCA-KS, 2023a). Although there has been a slight increase in the number of licensed child care programs over the last few years, there is still a sizable gap between the supply of child care programs and demand for child care by families in Kansas. Though there is more child care demand than supply across the state, we can identify areas of extreme need by locating child care deserts, which are communities with more than 50 children under age 5 that either have no child care providers or have three times the number of children as there are licensed child care slots. Rural and frontier counties in Kansas are more likely to be considered child care deserts, as shown in [Figure 13](#) on the next page.

Figure 13. Child Care Deserts in Kansas, December 2021



Medium-sized child care centers in Kansas, those with approximately 70 children enrolled, frequently operate in deficits on an annual basis (KU-CPPR, 2022a, 2022c). Child care program owners and administrators must carefully balance their overhead costs with families' ability to pay for child care. In the state's current single-payer business model for child care, rising child care costs are often passed along to families in the form of increased tuition, leaving parents to either pay more at their current program, find and transition to a more affordable program, or go without child care. In addition to the burden of child care cost placed on families, the current business model negatively affects child care administrators, employers, and the Kansas economy (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2021; KU-CPPR, 2022c). Instead, multi-payer child care business models ease this burden by funding child care through a three-way split between family, employer, and government sources. As discussed in the [Ecosystem Section](#), innovative alternatives to the single-payer child care business model are being implemented or piloted, with Michigan, Kentucky, and North Dakota as examples of these efforts. All groups can benefit from multi-payer

approaches to child care: families experience lower out-of-pocket tuition costs, child care program owners and administrators can adequately operate their programs without sacrificing child safety, employers can recruit and retain qualified and skilled workers who are parents, and the Kansas economy can experience ripple effects that generate increased local and state revenue.

Even for families earning livable wages through stable employment, child care remains largely unaffordable. The average annual child care cost is \$11,222 for an infant and \$8,798 for a four-year-old, which both exceed annual in-state tuition of \$8,737 for a four-year public college (Economic Policy Institute, 2020). For a Kansas family of four earning a median household income of \$64,521, child care for an infant and four-year-old would cost almost one-third (31%) of their annual income if they did not apply for and receive Child Care Assistance (USCB, 2022b). Because of this excessive cost, many families opt out of child care programs altogether and decide for one parent—usually mothers—to stay home to care for their children, a trend magnified by COVID-19 pandemic restrictions (Calarco et al., 2021; Limonic, 2023).

Child Care Assistance is available to families with incomes at or below 250% FPL, which is below \$75,000 annual income for a family of four. An eligible family can select an available child care provider who meets eligibility criteria, such as being licensed by KDHE and enrolled as a DCF child care provider (Whiteside-Hicks, 2023). Over the past decade, the number of children enrolled in the Child Care Assistance program has declined from a monthly average of 17,682 children in 2012 to a monthly average of 11,737 in 2021 (DCF, 2023c). Less than half of the licensed child care facilities in Kansas are enrolled as a DCF child care provider, which can be a barrier to families using Child Care Assistance (Whiteside-Hicks, 2023). Without long-term investments and collaboration across public and private sectors to stabilize and sustain child care, Kansas families may face exceedingly challenging decisions about child care, which may have ripple effects on families' abilities to meet other basic needs, as well as the Kansas economy at large.



Transportation

Transportation connects people to other basic needs, such as food, health care, and child care, as well as allows them to participate in other important aspects

of daily life, such as employment, education, and socialization. Modes of transportation may differ based on locality, as public transit and bicycles are more common in densely populated areas compared to rural areas, whereas motor vehicles are common across all regions. However, transportation challenges occur in all county types.

In a study conducted by Wichita State University's CARE and PPMC, in partnership with DCF (2023), 770 families with young children across counties representative of all population density categories were surveyed. Almost half (46%) of participating families did not have a car.

63% of families (more than three-fifths) did not have access to transportation when needed.

In another study, interview and focus group participants from less densely populated communities, such as those in frontier and rural counties, indicated that availability, flexibility, and safety of public transportation were challenging issues (Kansas WorkS & KDHE, 2022). Regardless of where someone lives, inconsistent, unreliable transportation has implications for both an individual and their community. Families who experience transportation challenges likely experience challenges accessing child care, health care, and related services.

Transportation in rural communities presents unique challenges due to a lack of access to public transportation, and distance and time that rural families may need to travel to meet their basic needs and participate in society. For example, health care providers in rural areas indicate that they draw patients from one to two hours away (Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute, 2020). In 15 predominantly Frontier counties, there are no public transportation services available (KDHE, 2022c). Barriers to adequate transportation include limited or insufficient labor, supplies, facilities, and funding (Health WorkS & KDHE, 2022). Transportation challenges experienced in rural communities may magnify health disparities and health inequities, which may be disproportionately experienced by several populations including young children with and without disabilities, pregnant women, individuals with specialized health care needs, families who earn less than a livable wage, older adults, people of color, and migrant populations (Health WorkS & KDHE, 2022). Hospitals, coalitions, and partners across Kansas are collaborating to address transportation needs within their communities (Health WorkS & KDHE, 2022). However, problem-solving these transportation challenges is ongoing due to the state's steadily decreasing rural population which changes and reduces available supports, labor, and funding.

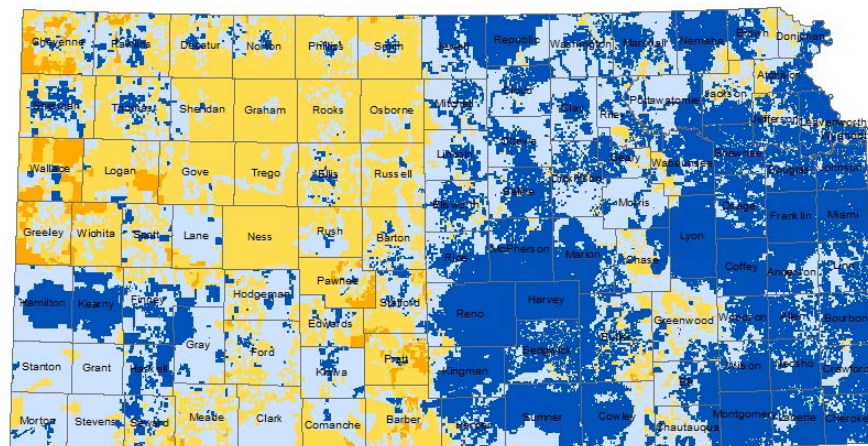


Technology

Well into the 21st Century, access to high-speed internet is not a luxury, it is a necessity. High-speed internet allows people to access informational content, such as program applications and news, and connect with others. As of 2022, almost all (93.2%) Kansas households had a computer, yet only 86.5% of households were enrolled in a broadband internet subscription (USCB, 2022b).

The importance of efficient internet became even more apparent during the pandemic, which has raised concerns about internet access, affordability, and quality across Kansas. The Institute of Political and Social Research (IPSR) at the University of Kansas sought to develop accurate understandings of broadband access across Kansas due to a historical lack of reliable and comprehensive data available (Ginther et al., 2023). Overall, researchers identified a rural-urban divide in accessibility and affordability of quality internet service, such as the one shown in [Figure 14](#). Kansans living in more densely populated areas generally had multiple internet service providers to choose from, which contributed to lower internet costs (\$74 monthly average) with faster speeds (above 100 Mbps) and higher satisfaction (70%), compared to Kansans in less populated regions who had one or no internet service providers and experienced higher internet costs (\$86 monthly average) with slower speeds (below 100 Mbps) and lower satisfaction (46%). Researchers found that Kansans who were unable to attain quality internet access reportedly experienced a range of negative feelings, such as abandonment, living in a black hole, helplessness, and frustration, among others.

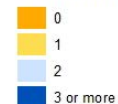
Figure 14: Broadband Internet Access in Kansas, 2020, Number of Internet Service Providers



Source: Institute for Policy & Social Research, The University of Kansas; data from Federal Communications Commission (June 2020 V1).

Data from providers offering consumers fixed broadband services, excluding satellite services.

Number of ISPs



When Kansans do not have reliable or affordable internet access, or technology to access the internet, they frequently experience low digital literacy, fewer connections to peers who are digitally literate, and challenges accessing information (Ginther et al., 2023). To fill this gap, public libraries provide Kansans with internet and computer access and librarians can promote digital literacy by assisting library patrons in expanding and improving their technology skills. Additionally, internet services at public libraries allow Kansans to access

information that can improve their well-being, such as resources to support survivors of domestic violence, and to apply for other public services, such as the range of services and supports available across the early childhood ecosystem.

Internet access is increasingly important to families with young children because information and paperwork to establish eligibility for services and supports across the early childhood ecosystem are largely available through the internet (e.g., KDHE, 2023c; KSDE, 2023d).

Further, internet-based early intervention, such as virtual training and consultation, is an established, research-based alternate to in-person service provision (Meadan & Daczewitz, 2015). Remote early intervention service provision can facilitate statistically significant progress toward child and family goals when families in rural areas have reliable internet access (Rooks-Ellis et al., 2020). The abrupt shift from in-person to remote learning and service provision during the pandemic highlighted the importance—and unreliability—of internet access for families with children (Ginther et al., 2023). Therefore, having reliable and affordable internet and technology access is essential to support young Kansas families make the shift from surviving to thriving.

To increase availability and quality of internet in the state, Kansas recently approved millions of dollars to expand broadband access to rural communities (Kansas Department of Commerce, 2023). The state government's acknowledgment of the importance of high-speed internet has helped lower internet costs.

30%

of eligible Kansas households have enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program as of January 2024. This effort will help decrease the cost of high-speed internet. *Kansas Office of the Governor, 2023a; Universal Service Administrative Company, 2024.*

Implications of Unmet Basic Needs

To improve long-term child and family well-being, the interconnectedness of many barriers experienced by children and families must be recognized (Friedline et al., 2021; KSDE, 2023c; Skinner et al., 2023). Families with young children can best thrive within a sustainable early childhood ecosystem of support, which can come to fruition when challenges to meeting basic needs discussed in this section are addressed. However, an inefficient and ineffective early childhood ecosystem can perpetuate, and even magnify, these same challenges experienced by children and families. This shift will cause ripple effects that negatively affect the Kansas economy, workforce, individuals, and communities.

Fostering Employment

Employment is essential for most families to meet their basic needs. A livable wage, one that allows families to meet basic needs and be self-sufficient, is necessary. Administration, transportation, sales, service, production, and education are the state's six largest employment industries in Kansas, employing more than half of its workforce, but median wages across these top industries fall below a livable wage (BLS, 2023a). Much of the Kansas workforce is insufficiently compensated, which undermines their abilities to adequately meet basic needs.

Out of the nearly 1.5 million adults in the Kansas workforce, 44% are parents and 10% are parents of young children (USCB, 2023). Unfortunately, more than 60,000 Kansas parents of minor children are out of the workforce, which leaves Kansas with lower workforce participation than Missouri and Nebraska (Heggeness, 2023). On a positive note, 70% of married couples with at least one child younger than five have both parents working, which increased to 80% after at least one child is school-age (Heggeness, 2023).

Employment is crucial for women's economic security, social equality, and the overall sustainability of the economy (Alon et al., 2020; Hyland et al., 2020). Yet, women are five to eight times more likely than men to have their employment affected by caregiving responsibilities, such as taking on brief or extended caregiving responsibilities for a sick child or aging parent, which may require mothers to work part-time or to take extended time away from employment due to challenges arranging or affording child care (Almeida & Salas-Betsch, 2023; Alon et al., 2020). Relatedly, the increased caregiving burden on mothers can negatively affect their income. In particular, the poverty rate for single mother households is 34% in Kansas (KDHE, 2022c). Researchers have found that availability and accessibility of public child care and child care assistance programs can counteract the caregiving burden placed on mothers, especially for single mothers and mothers with lower incomes, by ensuring that their children are safe and cared for so that mothers can dedicate adequate time to work, training, or continuing education (Heggeness et al., 2024).

Families can best meet their basic needs when they have stable employment where they earn sufficient income and have supportive employers (KDHE, 2021; Williams et al., 2019). In a recent survey of Kansans who were asked about employer support, such as flexibility for family

emergencies, respectful and accommodating of family responsibilities, career advancement, 40% of parents of young children reported experiencing high employer support, as did 38% of rural dwellers (KU-CPPR, 2023e). While these are considerable percentages of high employer support, more than half of survey respondents reported less positive sentiments about employer support. Rigid workplace policies are often at odds with families' abilities to meet basic needs and adjust to evolving needs, especially when raising young children.

Rigid workplace policies, which are associated with lower wage positions, contribute to work-family conflicts (Rhee et al., 2020). These policies often create conditions that conflict with the needs of families with young children, adding stress and logistical barriers to families (Williams et al., 2019). Because lower wage positions are associated with inconsistent or off-hour schedules, parents or other primary caregivers may not be able to participate in recurring family routines responsibilities and, such as mealtimes and bedtimes, doctor appointments, and child care pick-ups and drop-offs (Swanberg et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2019). Additionally, lower wage jobs frequently offer limited or no parental or sick leave, which can lead to employees losing pay if they need to care for their child or postpone caring for their child and meeting their child's basic needs by remaining at work (Stoddard-Dare et al., 2018). Balancing employment, child care, and meeting basic needs is challenging, especially for families who earn lower wages.

Family-friendly workplace policies include adequate wages, flexible work schedules, comprehensive and affordable health coverage, paid parental leave, lactation and breastfeeding supports, and more (Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition, 2023). These adjustments increase opportunities for families to establish and maintain employment while also benefiting employers by boosting productivity and reducing turnover (Williams et al., 2018). Implementing these flexible workplace policies can strengthen families, businesses, and the Kansas economy. Therefore, recent efforts have been devoted to evaluating and improving the family-friendliness of workplaces across Kansas.

To date, 29 Kansas employers have participated in the Family-Friendly Workplace Employee Survey, administered by Kansas Power of the Positive (KPoP), to gain insight from their employees about ways to better support

employees who have children (Ringerling, 2023). Overall, employees generally reported their employers' efforts as "good" at addressing the following characteristics of family-friendly workplaces: paid parental leave, flexible work schedules, employee wellness offerings, and breastfeeding support. Still, results suggested that there is room for progress. Employees categorized support for child care access as "fair" and collectively rated the following conditions as "poor:" subsidizing child care costs, providing on-site child care, offering access to parenting support and other family resources, and supporting infants in the workplace.

Additionally, [Family-Friendly Workplace Employee Survey](#) results revealed that family-friendly workplace conditions are not equitably distributed among jobs, industries, and workers (Ringerling, 2023). Employees who earned hourly wages, worked in manufacturing, and those who identified as Black and Hispanic women were more likely to rate their workplaces as "poor" or less family-friendly among certain conditions compared to peers who worked in salaried positions, in non-manufacturing industries, and who were White. Next to paid family leave, breastfeeding supports may be the family-friendly policies that most directly benefit women in the workplace. Only about one-fourth (34%) of employers have dedicated lactation rooms ([Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition, 2021](#)).

Less than half (44%)
of Kansas employers indicate
that they have a written lactation
accommodation policy.
Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition, 2021

This is an encouraging sign, but more progress is anticipated due to the federal [PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act](#) and [Pregnant Workers Fairness Act](#) that went into effect December 2022 and June 2023 respectively, which require all employers to provide breastfeeding workers with private, clean spaces, other than restrooms, along with reasonable break time to express milk for up to one year after the child's birth.

Resource Spotlight: Family Forward Workplaces

Family Forward Workplaces is an innovative initiative to improve children's health and well-being and keep Kansas businesses and workplaces competitive. It is an employer-led change to increase access to research-based, family friendly practices—big and small—that improve workplace productivity, recruitment and retention; grow a strong economy; and support children's healthy development.

The [Guide to Family Forward Workplaces](#) provides evidence-based guidance on the benefits of family friendly workplace policies, sample policies and case studies of successful implementation, and steps for how to get started implementing new policies or enhancing existing ones. Kansas business owners and employees can use this guide as a reference to start conversation and action to support working families and strengthen the Kansas economy.



Navigating Early Childhood Services and Supports

In Kansas, early childhood services and supports are part of a larger early childhood ecosystem that facilitates achievement of healthy development, strong families, and early learning (Kansas Children's Cabinet, 2020). The purpose of this comprehensive ecosystem is to support families to meet their basic needs, which promotes bright futures for young children. Though early childhood in Kansas primarily supports children and families by focusing on early learning and development, this ecosystem aims to broadly support child and family well-being because children, families, and their supports are interrelated.

Families often must take a "connect the dots" approach to navigating services and supports. This is due to fragmentation across the Kansas early childhood ecosystem. Though early childhood services and supports still exist in distinct sectors, several cross-agency collaborative initiatives, many of which were detailed in the Ecosystem and Workforce Sections, have been developed and implemented to minimize the navigation burden placed on families with improved ecosystem efficiency. However, navigating the array of early childhood services and supports within the ecosystem generally remains challenging for all families. Additionally, specific points within early childhood can be especially difficult, such as transitions into preschool and kindergarten, and some populations may face greater barriers than others.

For example, Kansas parents and caregivers involved with the child welfare system were more likely than the general population to experience barriers navigating the early childhood ecosystem (DCF, 2022). The Parent Experience Survey included 647 participants who were Kansas parents and caregivers who had lived experience with the child welfare system, such as receiving ongoing support from a case worker, having children in foster care, and interacting with courts as part of their child welfare case. Parents and caregivers involved with the child welfare system indicated difficulty that they could find (25%), access (33%), and quickly receive (33%) early childhood services.

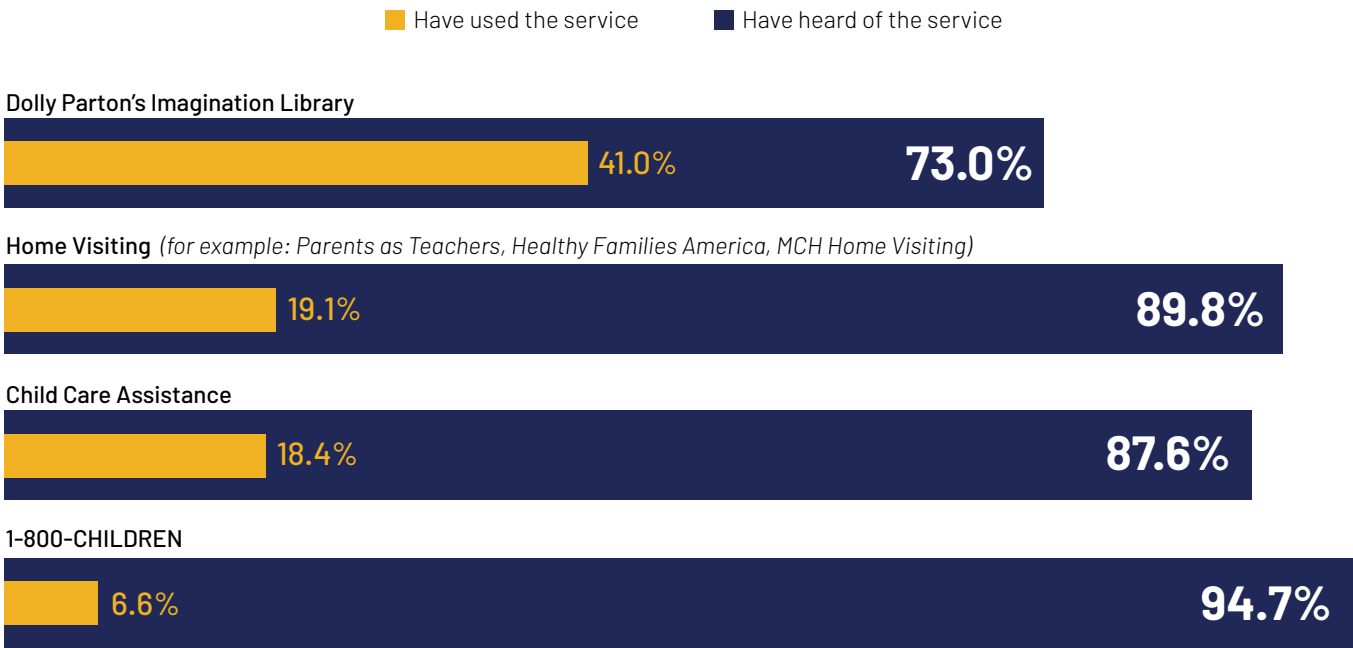


Another barrier that many Kansas families may face is to not have a strong sense of belonging or feel represented within their community. In a study conducted by CPPR, *Young Families' Experiences of Social Connection (2023e)*, 1,062 Kansans participated in a survey designed to understand experiences, attitudes, and behaviors of parents with young children as they relate to social connectedness and support.

Respondents' demographic characteristics, including race, ethnicity, and educational attainment, largely mirrored those of the Kansas population. By design, the study oversampled parents of young children (38%) and families residing in rural areas (28%). In addition, women (65%), English-speakers (99%), and those with incomes below the median household income for the state (\$68,925; 72%) were overrepresented in the sample. Results demonstrated that Kansas family units generally appear to be resilient, but this resilience probably does not extend out to communities within which families are

situated. For example, two-thirds of Kansas families with young children felt as though their family was thriving and that they were supported by their family and personal choices. However, almost all (93%) Kansas parents of young children reported having only some, little, or no input in their community. In general, about half of Kansan survey respondents did not feel that they trusted someone whom they could ask for advice about one or more of the following basic needs: mental health, finances, food and nutrition, relationships, parenting. Within the early childhood ecosystem, a majority of families with young children under 6 or those who were expecting reported being familiar with early childhood initiatives and services but had not used or participated in them (see table "Family Experiences with early childhood Services and Supports"). Therefore, data suggest a disconnect between families and communities and available supports. However, further examination is warranted to better understand why families experience these disconnects.

Figure 15. Family Experiences With Early Childhood Services and Supports.
KU-CPPR, 2023e





When families do navigate supports and services within the early childhood ecosystem, they often experience this as outsiders who have less knowledge than professionals, which can lead to less informed and unilateral decision-making. In a Fall 2022 survey of over 1,500 Kansas families and providers (KU-CPPR, 2022a), three themes emerged from the findings:

- Families express gaps in awareness and knowledge of their child's developmental health.
- Families feel overwhelmed trying to navigate and access timely developmental health information about their child(ren).
- Families have a hard time identifying "who to trust" to provide culturally responsive information and supports.

Therefore, data reveal that Kansas families may not feel confident navigating early childhood supports and services due to challenges establishing trusting relationships with professionals and programs that serve them.

To learn how to better support families across Kansas, the Our Tomorrows (KU-CPPR, 2023d) project captured family experiences about thriving and surviving. Our Tomorrows comprises both a data collection tool and a community development approach that invites families, communities, and decision-makers into a shared process for making sense of our daily realities. In summer 2023, the project collected stories from 214 Kansans. Recruitment efforts prioritized people whose annual household incomes were \$35,000 or less, and who had children ages five and younger living in the household. Our Tomorrows data indicated that for families seeking early childhood services, trust was the most important factor. Responding to the Our Tomorrows prompt "when I need help with something for myself and/or my family, I first turn to....," Kansans tended to prioritize trust over both cost and shared culture, language, and beliefs.

Particularly tellingly, Kansans were more likely to trust family, friends, and their own intuitions, but not doctors, agencies, or the news. Responding to the prompt “I usually trust information that comes from...,” respondents were far less likely to place a dot near “doctors, community agencies, news outlets, or others” than they were “my family or friends” and “my own experiences and instincts.”

For young Kansan families, interconnected factors of trust, connection, and community seem to make otherwise unbearable, and often unexpected, experiences more manageable. Results showed that essential support emerged from authentic social connections amongst Kansans within their local communities. This support was often not sought, but instinctually provided by their community at times when young families needed support the most. To illustrate:

“It’s a close-knit community where everyone knows everyone else. We have a strong sense of community spirit, and we’re always willing to help out our neighbors.”

“Recently took care of a family at work whose baby needed to go to a large facility when she was born. I am loosely friends with mom, and I was able to see how the community banded together to take care of mom while she was in Kansas City with her baby, from food to caring for her house and dogs.”

“Our community definitely feels like a big family and it’s nice to have peace of mind knowing that my children have people around them that we trust who would be able to help them if needed.”

Speaking to the experience of having to relocate their family, including three young children, during a “debilitating heat wave,” one Kansan shared:

“Thankfully, our local community has been such a relieving support system. Between food, fans, furniture, and other donations, it has cushioned what otherwise has been a horrible experience.”

Families have invaluable knowledge based on their lived experience and interactions with the early childhood ecosystem, early childhood professionals, and their communities. Insights gleaned from families who participated in Young Families’ Experiences of Social Connection (2023e) and Our Tomorrows (KU-CPPR, 2023d) are key to understanding complex barriers to early childhood service provision in Kansas. These findings also suggest that families are uniquely situated to engage in problem-solving and decision-making efforts to develop an early childhood ecosystem that is most responsive to their needs.



Opportunities and Next Steps

This Needs Assessment identified many ongoing and upcoming initiatives across Kansas to ensure that all Kansas children and families can thrive (*All In For Kansas Kids*, 2020a). Notable progress has been made toward the provision of accessible, affordable, and available services and supports for children and families through a coordinated, high-quality early childhood ecosystem. Needs were identified based on analysis of systems work that has occurred since the development of the five-year *All In For Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan (2020b). These needs were presented as findings to guide future work within the Kansas early childhood ecosystem. The gap analysis in [Table 11](#) demonstrates existing strengths identified in the 2019 Needs Assessment and new strengths identified since then, as well as gaps and opportunities for improvement across the Kansas early childhood programs, services, and infrastructure.

In this section, we briefly summarize key findings discussed in these previous sections:

- The Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem
- The Early Childhood Workforce in Kansas
- Experiences of Children and Families

Gap Analysis

Table 11: Kansas Early Childhood Programs, Services, and Infrastructure

Element	Existing Strengths from 2019 Needs Assessment	New Strengths since 2019 Needs Assessment	Gaps/Opportunities
Population Need and Capacity	Range of data regarding geographical distribution of numbers and service saturation, demographics of children receiving services, waitlist numbers, and services utilized by underserved populations.	Distinct Count of Children Data Dashboard launched in 2023 to provide unduplicated count of children receiving and awaiting services. Federal grant to enhance KSDE longitudinal data system to utilize unique child identifiers.	Opportunities to enhance understandings about children and families served across all early childhood services through statistical analyses of unduplicated data counts.
Navigation and Transition	Statewide early childhood programs that support early learning, healthy development, and strong families. Early Childhood Block Grant. State home visiting network. Pre-K offerings in most school districts with local flexibility. Local efforts to reach and engage underserved populations through coordinated recruiting and centralized entry points. Efforts to increase trauma-informed education, care, and approaches. Developmental screenings and Child-Find activities. Local efforts to support smooth transitions across the system. Integrated Referral and Intake System (IRIS). Help Me Grow (HMG).	1-800-CHILDREN centralized access point as part of HMG. Statewide online access to Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) for early childhood programs. Baby Steps pilot and expansion. Bridges program pilot. Child Care Accelerator Projects. Kindergarten Transition Toolkit. Statewide Expansion of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Expansion of Family Resource Centers. IRIS growth. UniteUS statewide agreement. Initiation, planning, and implementation of community-driven child care solutions facilitated by Child Care Aware of Kansas' Communities in Action (CIA) and Go Team programs. Efforts to recruit more child care providers to be enrolled with Child Care Assistance. Technical assistance facilitated by Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities' Infant-Toddler Specialist Network (KCCTO-ITSN) for early childhood professionals around infant-toddler mental health and caring for children with disabilities. Updated and expanded consumer education website (childcareinkansas.com) administered by the Department for Children and Families (DCF).	Limited child care capacity for infant-toddler care, care for children with disabilities, or care for nontraditional hours. Geographic variability in child care capacity. Limited full-day, full-week Pre-K offerings. Range of eligibility criteria and processes for children considered "high-risk" or "at-risk." Common disruptors: Cultural and linguistic barriers, geography, transportation, cost, and crises. Children reaching kindergarten without experiencing quality or any early education opportunities. Geographic and racial/ethnic inequities. Opportunities to expand IDEA Part C eligibility to infants and toddlers considered "at-risk." Statewide referral networks/resources create opportunities for cross-sector collaboration around service referrals. Increased alignment efforts across multiple home visiting programs can present families with options that meet their evolving needs. Opportunities exist to continue streamlining the enrollment experience for families.

Element	Existing Strengths from 2019 Needs Assessment	New Strengths since 2019 Needs Assessment	Gaps/Opportunities
Quality Across the Broader Early Childhood System	Kansas Prekindergarten Guide and Kansas Full-Day Kindergarten Guide. Kansas Family Engagement and Partnership Standards for Early Childhood. Kansas Quality Network/Quality Rating and Improvement System Pilot. Child Care Quality Initiative. Maternal and Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting Program. Kansans Can Star Recognition Program. Measurement of classroom quality using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS). Focus on quality and quality improvements across system at both local and state levels. Common Measures for ECBG.	Update of the Kansas Early Learning Standards. The Kansas Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) system modernization with Links 2 Quality (L2Q) pilot program. Quality improvement subgrants. Sunflower Summer Report. Statewide expansion of training on, and access to the ASQ for all early childhood settings.	Fragmented data collection regarding the quality of all early education settings. Lack of consistent definition of quality within and across early childhood settings. Expanding the reach of L2Q. Development and implementation of the Workforce Registry and the Career Pathway create opportunities to develop a continuum of high-quality training offerings aligned with home visiting and child care core competencies.

Element	Existing Strengths from 2019 Needs Assessment	New Strengths since 2019 Needs Assessment	Gaps/Opportunities
Workforce	Highly experienced child care workforce. Credentials of the home visiting and Part C workforce. Professional development networks. Access to required professional development.	Efforts to establish a workforce registry. Establishment and ongoing implementation of the Kansas Career Pathway for early childhood Professionals. Updated Core Competencies for Kansas early childhood professionals. The development of Shared Service Networks for Child Care professionals and businesses. Exploring wage scale and compensation strategies for early childhood professionals.	Varying early childhood workforce qualifications across services, programs, and models. Professional development accessibility: geography, cost, training topics. Implementation of the Pathway will begin with a statewide workforce study aimed at identifying factors essential to early childhood professional recruitment, training, and retention. Opportunities to improve workforce compensation and benefits. Recruitment and retention of diverse, highly qualified workforce. The Workforce Registry will provide opportunities to better understand workforce needs (e.g., training and professional development opportunities) based on relevant workforce data. Continued expansion of the Career Pathway and the Workforce Registry for use beyond child care. System-level approach and funding alignment to support workforce across all early childhood settings.

Element	Existing Strengths from 2019 Needs Assessment	New Strengths since 2019 Needs Assessment	Gaps/Opportunities
Facilities	Interest and support for co-location of agencies and organizations in the broader early childhood system.	Capital Project Fund Accelerator with private support and match provided for Accelerator grants. Start-up stipends for new child care facilities and to address health and safety issues. The development of Shared Service Networks for Child Care professionals and businesses.	Limited information or data regarding physical conditions of early childhood facilities. Need to consider facility improvements, maintenance, design, and engineering necessary for facilities to endure extreme weather events and keep children and the workforce safe during such events. Need to continue identifying consistent funding for facility capital needs. Opportunities exist to improve or enhance learning environments.
Funding	Fiscal mapping effort. Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) Fund and Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF).	One-time Sustainability Grants for child care providers. One-time Bonus payments for child care workers. Waived fingerprinting and state child care licensing fee. Funding State Match. Blended and braided multiple state and federal funding sources for the Child Care Accelerator opportunity. State support via SPARK funds.	Need to consider funding for preparing facilities to endure extreme weather events and keep children and the workforce safe during such events. CIA, Go Team, and other community resources offer opportunities to create public-private partnerships supporting community-driven child care solutions. Opportunities to implement multi-payer child care business model. Greater flexibility and alignment with existing resources.
Information Systems	Existing shared data systems and measures (Common Measures).	Establishment of ECIDS Data Trust. Statewide ASQ Online System. Technology for Home Visiting families to support remote visits. Development of the Workforce Registry. Investment to upgrade child care licensing data system. Creating Child Wellbeing Pathways. Kansas Community Data Dashboard. Efforts underway to modernize child care licensing system.	Variety and range of reporting mechanisms, requirements, and program outcomes. Need to expand the Workforce Registry users beyond child care professionals. Opportunity to continue connecting or aligning data systems such as the Workforce Registry, the child care licensing system, and child care assistance data system.

Element	Existing Strengths from 2019 Needs Assessment	New Strengths since 2019 Needs Assessment	Gaps/Opportunities
Partnerships	Existing willingness and interest in partnerships and cooperation at local and state levels. Wide range of community-level partners including non-early childhood providers, organizations, and agencies.	Community-driven public-private partnerships. Increased number of Community Child Care Coalitions. K-State 105 Economic Growth Initiative. The development of Shared Service Networks for Child Care professionals and businesses. Statewide and regional philanthropic-led partnership efforts such as those supported by Dane G. Hansen Foundation, Kansas Health Foundation, and the Patterson Foundation.	Need for greater cross-sector collaboration and public-private partnerships. Need for coordinated efforts focused on effective, sustainable collaboration and integration. Opportunities to compile and share lessons learned from the community-level.
Policies	Family-friendly policies for state employees. Statewide advocacy.	Expansion of Medicaid coverage for postpartum mothers. Increase in subsidy threshold. Implementing narrow cost analysis for Child Care Assistance rate setting.	Need for broader reach of family-friendly workplace policies.
Regulations	Existing regulations targeted at the safety and well-being of children.	Comprehensive child care regulation review. Re-establishment of Child Care Systems Improvement Team Small center pilot. Go-Team.	Complex regulatory learning curve. Inconsistencies interpreting and applying regulations. Burdens caused by local zoning regulations.
Systems Alignment	National Governors Association Learning Lab and Workgroup. Numerous workgroups and councils going in same direction. Statute for early childhood coordination K.S.A. 38-1901. Child care policy of the state K.S.A. 65-528. Local Interagency Coordinating Councils. Kansas Early Childhood Advisory Team.	State Directors team. Governor appointed Early Childhood Transition Task Force (Task Force) to examine the Kansas early childhood system. Launched the <i>All In for Kansas Kids</i> website. Early Childhood Recommendations Panel, Kansas Children's Cabinet acting Early Childhood Advisory Council and State Directors Team established by Kansas Governor Executive Order 20-02	Task Force recommendations provide a path to establish a state-level, single entity for early childhood services.

Key Findings *Kansas Early Childhood Ecosystem*

The Kansas early childhood ecosystem strives to provide the programs, services, resources, information systems, and partnerships needed to support the needs of Kansas children, their families, communities, and the early childhood workforce. Efforts to strengthen this vital ecosystem must consider interdependencies, complexities, and nuances across multiple systems and partners. Partners within the Kansas early childhood ecosystem have improved collaboration and alignment across state agencies, local organizations, and community initiatives, resulting in increased access to services and supports for children, families, and early childhood professionals. However, Kansas has experienced substantial limitations to this coordinated model. The Early Childhood Transition Task Force (Task Force), established by Executive [Order 23-01](#) in January 2023, [examined how to improve](#) efficiency and effectiveness within the state’s early childhood ecosystem and [provided recommendations](#) for unification within this coordinated cross-sector ecosystem. Complimentary to Task Force outcomes, findings from the 2024 Needs Assessment identified strengths and challenges around collaboration and alignment, public-partnerships for child care, shared referral systems, early childhood ecosystem navigation for families, professionals, and communities, and cross-sector data utilization across the Kansas early childhood ecosystem. These findings should be used in conjunction with the outcomes of the Task Force to strategically plan for a more synchronous early childhood ecosystem in Kansas.

Table 12: Ecosystem Findings

Element	Finding
Coordinated Governance Structure	Collaboration across state agencies and organizations has increased, creating greater efficiency and increased access to services. Inherent limitations remain in a coordinated governance model, including fiscal and regulatory differences across agencies, and a lack of centralized decision-making authority. For families, this means they continue to experience a fragmented system that is often unresponsive to their needs or otherwise inaccessible.
Public-Private Partnerships	Multiple funding streams were blended and braided to support child care needs within the early childhood ecosystem. However, overly restrictive requirements may prevent the state from being nimble enough to harness and capitalize on private investment in early childhood.
Data-Based Decision-Making	Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust to analyze the impact of early childhood investments using cross-agency data. This work is just beginning; partners express a desire to more flexibly share data to take full analytical advantage of existing data to understand outcomes for families within the ecosystem. Navigating multiple layers of data sharing requirements is a persistent challenge.

Key Findings *Kansas Early Childhood Workforce*

The Kansas early childhood workforce is full of skilled, dedicated, and hardworking professionals who are on the front lines nurturing and caring for our youngest Kansans. Although our workforce includes a range of professional fields beside child care, such as early intervention, early education, home visiting, infant/toddler mental health, and social work, we focused on child care here because this has been identified as the greatest need and must be tackled first. Child care professionals across Kansas fulfill an essential role facilitating early learning and development for our youngest Kansans, yet do not earn livable wages. While strides are being made to streamline workforce development opportunities, systemic changes are still necessary to recruit and retain highly qualified child care professionals in the early childhood workforce. The workforce findings from the 2024 Needs Assessment focused on three areas: recruitment and retention of early childhood professionals, child care administration, and workforce development

Table 13: Workforce Findings

Element	Finding
Workforce Recruitment, Development, and Retention	Integrated initiatives are being launched to recruit, retain, and elevate highly qualified early childhood professionals. Despite these efforts, early childhood professionals question how long they can remain in the field because of low wages and lack of benefits.
Affordable Child Care	Statewide strategies helped child care administrators keep their doors open despite workforce shortages, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. For many programs, future sustainability without a long-term funding infrastructure is questionable.

Key Findings *Experiences of Kansas Children and Families*

Experiences of children and families are shaped by their race/ethnicity, where they live and work, and what services and supports they might need. Meeting basic needs is essential for all children and families to live meaningful lives and contribute to their communities. Unique resources, strengths, and challenges were identified in each Kansas region, which influenced families' lived experiences, current reality, and future aspirations. Unfortunately, many Kansas families struggle to afford their basic needs, such as food, housing, health care, and child care, which negatively affects families, communities, employers, and the state's economy. Key findings from the 2024 Needs Assessment regarding experiences of children and families centered on families' unmet basic needs, employment needs, and navigating complex early childhood services and supports.

Table 14: Findings for Children and Families

Element	Finding
Basic Needs are Fundamental	Kansas implements services and supports to address individual child and family needs, such as parent education, mental health services, and job training. However, many families cannot thrive because they cannot access the basics, such as housing, health care, transportation, employment, and livable wages.

Conclusion

We embarked on a journey to understand the current early childhood landscape in Kansas by considering stories and experiences of Kansas children, families, and early childhood professionals, as well as evaluating the current status of the early childhood ecosystem in Kansas. We identified ways in which the early childhood ecosystem supports families with young children and the ways in which it falls short in doing so. We seek a Kansas in which children and families thrive in caring, safe, and connected communities with high-quality early childhood programs and services that are accessible, available, affordable, and implemented by an early childhood workforce that is adequately compensated and highly qualified. To achieve this outcome, our resources and investments must align with our vision.

We are on a journey toward a Kansas in which...



Children and families thrive in caring and connected communities.



High-quality early childhood programs and services are accessible and available.



The early childhood workforce is valued and respected.



Our resources and investments align with our vision.



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Appendices

Key Term Definitions

The 2024 Needs Assessment is funded by the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five grant program. In compliance with their requirements, we are including key term definitions:

Quality early childhood care and education (ECCE)

Early childhood services and programs that provide a safe, stable, and nurturing environment where every child can thrive.

Early childhood care and education availability

All families have informed, timely, and equitable access to quality early childhood care and education services and programs. Vulnerable and underserved children receive services to address specific needs with targeted supports that address more complex needs.

Vulnerable or underserved children

Children under 6 years old who experience barriers or challenges to accessing or engaging in high-quality early childhood care and education services for a range of reasons, including, but not limited to: low household income or economic instability, homelessness, trauma, parental incarceration, foster care risk or placement, and special health care and developmental needs. Two additional populations have unique needs related to the early childhood care and education system: migrant children and children from tribal populations.

Children in rural areas

Children under 6 years old who live in frontier, rural, or densely settled rural counties, per the definitions used by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

Early childhood care and education system

The Kansas early childhood care and education system is a tiered system of coordinated and comprehensive supports and core services that support healthy development and early learning. Core services include early care and education, home visiting, parent education, maternal child health programs, and services, supports, and infrastructure where the child age birth through five is the primary recipient.

Children with special health care needs

Children under 6 years old who require special services due to developmental/intellectual or social-emotional disabilities, sensory or motor impairment, or chronic illness.

Migrant children

Migrant children under 6 years old who have moved from one school district to another in the past three years to enable a parent or guardian to seek or obtain temporary or seasonal agricultural or fishing work.

Tribal children

Children under 6 years old from one of the four federally recognized tribal communities in Kansas (the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, the Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas, the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, and the Sac & Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska).

Table A.1: Kansas-Specific Reports Included in Current Needs Assessment Synthesis

Report	Description	URL
Broadband in Kansas: The Challenges of Digital Access and Affordability	Kansas survey of broadband coverage	ipsr.ku.edu/broadband/BroadbandinKansas.pdf
Kansas Statewide Housing Needs Assessment 2021	County-level data on the cost burden of housing	kshousingcorp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021_12-21-Kansas-Housing-Executive-Summary-Low-Res.pdf
Family-Friendly Workplace Analysis	Survey results of worker perceptions of family-friendly workplace policies	www.kdhe.ks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/29021/Family-Friendly-Workplace-Survey-Social-Equity-Analysis-PDF?bidId=
Child Care Pandemic Relief Midpoint Impact Report (Department for Children and Families, July 2022)	Summary of CCDF pandemic relief initiatives	unpublished
Interim MCH Needs Assessment (Spring 2023)	Mixed methods assessment with data on professionals and family perspectives on MCH programs and services	unpublished
Kansas Home Visiting: Connecting Parents to Support	Estimate of reach of home visiting programs among eligible families	kschildrenscabinet.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/KansasHomeVisiting-2022.pdf
Kansas Connecting Communities: Improving Maternal and Child Health Outcomes by Addressing Perinatal Behavioral Health	Outcome data of 4-year education program	unpublished
Kansas MIECHV Community Readiness Assessment Technical Report	County-level analysis/scoring of early childhood risk factors	unpublished
Local Interagency Coordinating Council Network Analysis	Assessment of collaboration among Local Interagency Coordinating Councils	unpublished
Kansas Speaks Fall 2022 (Statewide Public Opinion Survey)	Survey findings on perceptions of Kansas economy, government, other topics	www.fhsu.edu/docking/Kansas-Speaks/2022-kansas-speaks-report-v6.pdf
Examining the Present and Future of Child Care in Kansas	Spring 2022 results of survey of child care owners and staff	www.capita.org/capita-ideas/2022/8/2/new-report-examining-the-present-and-future-of-child-care-in-kansas
The Status of Women in Kansas	Report highlighting needs and challenges of women in the state	ipsr.ku.edu/publicat/StatusofWomeninKansas2021.pdf
KCCTO Early Childhood Workforce 2022 Statewide Needs Assessment	Survey results highlight perceptions and professional development needs/preferences of early childhood staff	unpublished
Kansas PDG B-5 Year Three Annual Performance Progress Report	Summary of grant-funded efforts under PDG Birth Through Five grant program	unpublished
2023 Child Care Supply Demand Report	Summary of capacity of child care system in Kansas	mailchi.mp/ks/supply-demand
Final Report of the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force	Recommendations to improve and unify early childhood programming in Kansas	https://governor.kansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Kansas-Early-Childhood-Transition-Task-Force-Final-Report.pdf
Kansas Statistical Abstract 2022	Latest available state, county, and city-level data for Kansas, including population, employment, and income data	https://ipsr.ku.edu/ksdata/ksah/

Report	Description	URL
The Economics of Child Care and Child Care Licensing in Kansas	Results provide insight about the economics of child care and child care licensing in Kansas	currently unpublished, update in January
Chronic Disease Risk Reduction Program Evaluation: Ripple Effects Mapping Outcomes	Results show that ripple effects from tobacco cessation and prevention efforts facilitate positive early childhood development outcomes	unpublished

Table A.2: Methods Used to Engage Partners, Providers and Families in the Needs Assessment Process

Engagement Activity	Who Was Engaged	Number of Participants
Our Tomorrows: Facilitated Engagement Sessions	Family child care home provider, home visiting coordinators, Interagency Coordinating Council administrators, Preschool administrators, Researchers, and Family Resource Council Coordinators	6
Child Care Aware Focus Groups	Child care directors of facilities that closed during the pandemic (some of which reopened, others that did not)	3
Maternal and Child Health/Home Visiting Community Readiness Survey	Expectant parents and caregivers of children	580
MCH Needs Assessment Workforce	Kansas Maternal and Child Health program staff	184
MIECHV Professional Well-Being and Workforce Support Survey	Home visiting staff	57
MIECHV DEIB and Well-Being Focus Groups	Home visitors	24
Governor's ECTTF Listening Sessions	Community members	500+
Developmental Health Survey	Family members and early childhood professionals	1,479
Young Families' Experiences of Social Connection Survey	Participants largely represented Kansas demographics; Kansas parents of young children and families residing in rural areas were overrepresented in the sample	1,062
Our Tomorrows: Sensemaking	Low-income individuals whose annual household incomes were \$35,000 or less	214
MCH Home Visiting Workforce Survey	Home visitors and home visiting program supervisors	88 (64 home visitors, 24 supervisors)
Universal Home Visiting Expansion Project (UHVEP) Supervisor Interview/Survey	Program supervisors	13 supervisor interviews; 3 supervisor surveys
UHVEP Family Interviews	Kansas Maternal and Child Health home visiting clients	3
MIECHV Community Readiness Workforce Survey	Home visitors and program supervisors	455 (335 home visitors, 120 supervisors)
KCTTO Facilitated Feedback Sessions	Providers from 21 counties	46
Developmental Health Focus Groups	Parents and caregivers	87
Child Care Provider Experience Mapping	Child care providers	400+
All in for Kansas Kids weekly updates	Early childhood constituents statewide	3,514
All in for Kansas Kids monthly webinars	Early childhood constituents statewide	100 participants per month
KCCTO/Workforce Development Advisory Group Child Care Workforce Survey	Child care professionals	1,660

Table A.3: Percent of Population Under Age 6 by County. *U.S. Census Bureau (2022a)*

County	% Under Age 6	County	% Under Age 6	County	% Under Age 6
Allen	7.3% - 8.6%	Kearny	8.7% - 13.7%	Marshall	7.3% - 8.6%
Atchison	6.2% - 7.2%	Kiowa	6.2% - 7.2%	Mitchell	7.3% - 8.6%
Barton	7.3% - 8.6%	Lane	6.2% - 7.2%	Morris	6.2% - 7.2%
Bourbon	7.3% - 8.6%	Lincoln	4.9% - 6.1%	Nemaha	7.3% - 8.6%
Cherokee	6.2% - 7.2%	Logan	8.7% - 13.7%	Norton	6.2% - 7.2%
Cowley	6.2% - 7.2%	Meade	7.3% - 8.6%	Ottawa	4.9% - 6.1%
Dickinson	6.2% - 7.2%	Morton	6.2% - 7.2%	Pawnee	4.9% - 6.1%
Ellis	6.2% - 7.2%	Ness	6.2% - 7.2%	Pratt	6.2% - 7.2%
Finney	8.7% - 13.7%	Osborne	7.3% - 8.6%	Republic	6.2% - 7.2%
Ford	8.7% - 13.7%	Phillips	6.2% - 7.2%	Rice	6.2% - 7.2%
Jackson	7.3% - 8.6%	Rawlins	7.3% - 8.6%	Russell	6.2% - 7.2%
Jefferson	6.2% - 7.2%	Rooks	6.2% - 7.2%	Scott	7.3% - 8.6%
Labette	7.3% - 8.6%	Rush	4.9% - 6.1%	Stevens	7.3% - 8.6%
Lyon	6.2% - 7.2%	Sheridan	6.2% - 7.2%	Sumner	6.2% - 7.2%
McPherson	6.2% - 7.2%	Sherman	6.2% - 7.2%	Thomas	7.3% - 8.6%
Neosho	7.3% - 8.6%	Smith	4.9% - 6.1%	Wabaunsee	6.2% - 7.2%
Osage	6.2% - 7.2%	Stafford	7.3% - 8.6%	Washington	7.3% - 8.6%
Pottawatomie	7.3% - 8.6%	Stanton	6.2% - 7.2%	Wilson	6.2% - 7.2%
Seward	8.7% - 13.7%	Trego	6.2% - 7.2%	Woodson	4.9% - 6.1%
Barber	7.3% - 8.6%	Wallace	8.7% - 13.7%	Butler	6.2% - 7.2%
Chase	4.9% - 6.1%	Wichita	7.3% - 8.6%	Crawford	6.2% - 7.2%
Chautauqua	6.2% - 7.2%	Anderson	7.3% - 8.6%	Franklin	6.2% - 7.2%
Cheyenne	7.3% - 8.6%	Brown	7.3% - 8.6%	Geary	8.7% - 13.7%
Clark	6.2% - 7.2%	Clay	6.2% - 7.2%	Harvey	6.2% - 7.2%
Comanche	4.9% - 6.1%	Cloud	7.3% - 8.6%	Miami	6.2% - 7.2%
Decatur	6.2% - 7.2%	Coffey	4.9% - 6.1%	Montgomery	6.2% - 7.2%
Edwards	6.2% - 7.2%	Doniphan	4.9% - 6.1%	Reno	6.2% - 7.2%
Elk	4.9% - 6.1%	Ellsworth	4.9% - 6.1%	Riley	4.9% - 6.1%
Gove	7.3% - 8.6%	Grant	8.7% - 13.7%	Saline	6.2% - 7.2%
Graham	4.9% - 6.1%	Gray	8.7% - 13.7%	Douglas	4.9% - 6.1%
Greeley	7.3% - 8.6%	Harper	6.2% - 7.2%	Johnson	6.2% - 7.2%
Greenwood	4.9% - 6.1%	Haskell	7.3% - 8.6%	Leavenworth	7.3% - 8.6%
Hamilton	7.3% - 8.6%	Kingman	6.2% - 7.2%	Sedgwick	7.3% - 8.6%
Hodgeman	7.3% - 8.6%	Linn	6.2% - 7.2%	Shawnee	6.2% - 7.2%
Jewell	4.9% - 6.1%	Marion	6.2% - 7.2%	Wyandotte	8.7% - 13.7%

Table A.4: Percent of Children Under 5 in Poverty in Kansas by County, 2017-2021. *U.S. Census Bureau (2022a)*

County	% in Poverty	County	% in Poverty	County	% in Poverty
Allen	26.8% - 47.7%	Kearny	16.6% - 26.7%	Marshall	7.1% - 16.5%
Atchison	16.6% - 26.7%	Kiowa	0.0% - 7.0%	Mitchell	0.0% - 7.0%
Barton	26.8% - 47.7%	Lane	7.1% - 16.5%	Morris	7.1% - 16.5%
Bourbon	16.6% - 26.7%	Lincoln	16.6% - 26.7%	Nemaha	0.0% - 7.0%
Cherokee	7.1% - 16.5%	Logan	0.0% - 7.0%	Norton	7.1% - 16.5%
Cowley	16.6% - 26.7%	Meade	7.1% - 16.5%	Ottawa	16.6% - 26.7%
Dickinson	0.0% - 7.0%	Morton	7.1% - 16.5%	Pawnee	0.0% - 7.0%
Ellis	16.6% - 26.7%	Ness	7.1% - 16.5%	Pratt	16.6% - 26.7%
Finney	16.6% - 26.7%	Osborne	7.1% - 16.5%	Republic	7.1% - 16.5%
Ford	16.6% - 26.7%	Phillips	16.6% - 26.7%	Rice	16.6% - 26.7%
Jackson	16.6% - 26.7%	Rawlins	16.6% - 26.7%	Russell	26.8% - 47.7%
Jefferson	16.6% - 26.7%	Rooks	0.0% - 7.0%	Scott	7.1% - 16.5%
Labette	16.6% - 26.7%	Rush	0.0% - 7.0%	Stevens	7.1% - 16.5%
Lyon	16.6% - 26.7%	Sheridan	0.0% - 7.0%	Sumner	7.1% - 16.5%
McPherson	0.0% - 7.0%	Sherman	0.0% - 7.0%	Thomas	0.0% - 7.0%
Neosho	16.6% - 26.7%	Smith	7.1% - 16.5%	Wabaunsee	0.0% - 7.0%
Osage	16.6% - 26.7%	Stafford	7.1% - 16.5%	Washington	7.1% - 16.5%
Pottawatomie	7.1% - 16.5%	Stanton	26.8% - 47.7%	Wilson	16.6% - 26.7%
Seward	16.6% - 26.7%	Trego	26.8% - 47.7%	Woodson	7.1% - 16.5%
Barber	26.8% - 47.7%	Wallace	26.8% - 47.7%	Butler	16.6% - 26.7%
Chase	7.1% - 16.5%	Wichita	26.8% - 47.7%	Crawford	16.6% - 26.7%
Chautauqua	16.6% - 26.7%	Anderson	7.1% - 16.5%	Franklin	7.1% - 16.5%
Cheyenne	26.8% - 47.7%	Brown	26.8% - 47.7%	Geary	26.8% - 47.7%
Clark	16.6% - 26.7%	Clay	16.6% - 26.7%	Harvey	7.1% - 16.5%
Comanche	0.0% - 7.0%	Cloud	0.0% - 7.0%	Miami	0.0% - 7.0%
Decatur	16.6% - 26.7%	Coffey	16.6% - 26.7%	Montgomery	26.8% - 47.7%
Edwards	0.0% - 7.0%	Doniphan	16.6% - 26.7%	Reno	16.6% - 26.7%
Elk	26.8% - 47.7%	Ellsworth	7.1% - 16.5%	Riley	7.1% - 16.5%
Gove	0.0% - 7.0%	Grant	7.1% - 16.5%	Saline	7.1% - 16.5%
Graham	7.1% - 16.5%	Gray	0.0% - 7.0%	Douglas	7.1% - 16.5%
Greeley	0.0% - 7.0%	Harper	26.8% - 47.7%	Johnson	0.0% - 7.0%
Greenwood	16.6% - 26.7%	Haskell	16.6% - 26.7%	Leavenworth	7.1% - 16.5%
Hamilton	0.0% - 7.0%	Kingman	16.6% - 26.7%	Sedgwick	16.6% - 26.7%
Hodgeman	16.6% - 26.7%	Linn	7.1% - 16.5%	Shawnee	16.6% - 26.7%
Jewell	16.6% - 26.7%	Marion	7.1% - 16.5%	Wyandotte	26.8% - 47.7%

Table A.5: Percent of Children Served by County. [Distinct Count of Children Data Dashboard](#)

County	% Served	County	% Served	County	% Served
Allen	62.8% - 80.6%	Kearny	46.5% - 62.7%	Marshall	80.7% - 100.0%
Atchison	23.4% - 46.4%	Kiowa	46.5% - 62.7%	Mitchell	80.7% - 100.0%
Barton	62.8% - 80.6%	Lane	80.7% - 100.0%	Morris	46.5% - 62.7%
Bourbon	23.4% - 46.4%	Lincoln	62.8% - 80.6%	Nemaha	62.8% - 80.6%
Cherokee	46.5% - 62.7%	Logan	80.7% - 100.0%	Norton	80.7% - 100.0%
Cowley	23.4% - 46.4%	Meade	46.5% - 62.7%	Ottawa	80.7% - 100.0%
Dickinson	62.8% - 80.6%	Morton	23.4% - 46.4%	Pawnee	80.7% - 100.0%
Ellis	62.8% - 80.6%	Ness	62.8% - 80.6%	Pratt	46.5% - 62.7%
Finney	46.5% - 62.7%	Osborne	62.8% - 80.6%	Republic	62.8% - 80.6%
Ford	23.4% - 46.4%	Phillips	80.7% - 100.0%	Rice	46.5% - 62.7%
Jackson	46.5% - 62.7%	Rawlins	46.5% - 62.7%	Russell	62.8% - 80.6%
Jefferson	80.7% - 100.0%	Rooks	62.8% - 80.6%	Scott	62.8% - 80.6%
Labette	46.5% - 62.7%	Rush	46.5% - 62.7%	Stevens	23.4% - 46.4%
Lyon	62.8% - 80.6%	Sheridan	80.7% - 100.0%	Sumner	46.5% - 62.7%
McPherson	62.8% - 80.6%	Sherman	62.8% - 80.6%	Thomas	80.7% - 100.0%
Neosho	62.8% - 80.6%	Smith	80.7% - 100.0%	Wabaunsee	46.5% - 62.7%
Osage	46.5% - 62.7%	Stafford	46.5% - 62.7%	Washington	62.8% - 80.6%
Pottawatomie	46.5% - 62.7%	Stanton	62.8% - 80.6%	Wilson	23.4% - 46.4%
Seward	23.4% - 46.4%	Trego	80.7% - 100.0%	Woodson	46.5% - 62.7%
Barber	46.5% - 62.7%	Wallace	23.4% - 46.4%	Butler	23.4% - 46.4%
Chase	46.5% - 62.7%	Wichita	23.4% - 46.4%	Crawford	80.7% - 100.0%
Chautauqua	23.4% - 46.4%	Anderson	23.4% - 46.4%	Franklin	46.5% - 62.7%
Cheyenne	46.5% - 62.7%	Brown	46.5% - 62.7%	Geary	23.4% - 46.4%
Clark	46.5% - 62.7%	Clay	62.8% - 80.6%	Harvey	23.4% - 46.4%
Comanche	62.8% - 80.6%	Cloud	80.7% - 100.0%	Miami	46.5% - 62.7%
Decatur	62.8% - 80.6%	Coffey	62.8% - 80.6%	Montgomery	46.5% - 62.7%
Edwards	46.5% - 62.7%	Doniphan	46.5% - 62.7%	Reno	46.5% - 62.7%
Elk	23.4% - 46.4%	Ellsworth	80.7% - 100.0%	Riley	46.5% - 62.7%
Gove	62.8% - 80.6%	Grant	23.4% - 46.4%	Saline	62.8% - 80.6%
Graham	80.7% - 100.0%	Gray	23.4% - 46.4%	Douglas	46.5% - 62.7%
Greeley	62.8% - 80.6%	Harper	62.8% - 80.6%	Johnson	46.5% - 62.7%
Greenwood	46.5% - 62.7%	Haskell	46.5% - 62.7%	Leavenworth	23.4% - 46.4%
Hamilton	46.5% - 62.7%	Kingman	23.4% - 46.4%	Sedgwick	23.4% - 46.4%
Hodgeman	23.4% - 46.4%	Linn	23.4% - 46.4%	Shawnee	46.5% - 62.7%
Jewell	46.5% - 62.7%	Marion	62.8% - 80.6%	Wyandotte	23.4% - 46.4%

Table A.6: Population Density Classifications in Kansas by County.

County	% Served	County	% Served	County	% Served
Allen	77.3	Greeley	86.4	Osborne	97.2
Anderson	84.5	Greenwood	93.1	Ottawa	77.9
Atchison	67.8	Hamilton	74.8	Pawnee	62.1
Barber	95.4	Harper	92	Phillips	90.5
Barton	81.8	Harvey	79.2	Pottawatomie	79.5
Bourbon	84.8	Haskell	76.9	Pratt	82.8
Brown	89.7	Hodgeman	85.5	Rawlins	105.4
Butler	69.2	Jackson	80.8	Reno	74.2
Chase	77.6	Jefferson	72.7	Republic	96.1
Chautauqua	90.5	Jewell	111.8	Rice	77
Cherokee	74.8	Johnson	65	Riley	35.9
Cheyenne	93.5	Kearny	84.2	Rooks	83.8
Clark	85.2	Kingman	74.5	Rush	84.6
Clay	89.4	Kiowa	89.4	Russell	88
Cloud	80.2	Labette	80.2	Saline	72.7
Coffey	78.9	Lane	92.6	Scott	84.9
Comanche	94.6	Leavenworth	65.3	Sedgwick	68.4
Cowley	72.7	Lincoln	93.4	Seward	72.4
Crawford	60.8	Linn	79.5	Shawnee	73.3
Decatur	99.2	Logan	85.1	Sheridan	93.1
Dickinson	77.6	Lyon	62.3	Sherman	81.2
Doniphan	70.7	Marion	81.8	Smith	98.8
Douglas	45.3	Marshall	87.6	Stafford	87.6
Edwards	79.6	McPherson	73	Stanton	86.6
Elk	102.4	Meade	80.8	Stevens	81.8
Ellis	57.7	Miami	71.5	Sumner	79.5
Ellsworth	67.8	Mitchell	89.4	Thomas	75.1
Finney	71.2	Montgomery	79.9	Trego	82.5
Ford	70.4	Morris	87.3	Wabaunsee	81.5
Franklin	69.5	Morton	83.8	Wallace	103
Geary	69.2	Nemaha	86.9	Washington	90.8
Gove	94.9	Neosho	80.8	Wichita	94.5
Graham	94.1	Ness	88	Wilson	89.4
Grant	80.2	Norton	65.6	Woodson	83.5
Gray	80.5	Osage	77.3	Wyandotte	68.6

Table A.7: Dependent Population per 100 People Age 18 to 64 in Kansas by County, 2022.

County	% Served	County	% Served	County	% Served
Allen	25.1	Greeley	1.6	Osborne	3.9
Anderson	13.4	Greenwood	5.2	Ottawa	8
Atchison	37.4	Hamilton	2.4	Pawnee	8.2
Barber	3.6	Harper	6.6	Phillips	5.4
Barton	28	Harvey	62.6	Pottawatomie	31.2
Bourbon	22.8	Haskell	6.2	Pratt	12.3
Brown	16.4	Hodgeman	2	Rawlins	2.4
Butler	47.7	Jackson	20.2	Reno	49
Chase	3.3	Jefferson	34.4	Republic	6.5
Chautauqua	5.3	Jewell	3.2	Rice	13
Cherokee	32.5	Johnson	1,307.30	Riley	116.6
Cheyenne	2.5	Kearny	4.4	Rooks	5.4
Clark	2	Kingman	8.3	Rush	4.1
Clay	12.5	Kiowa	3.3	Russell	7.5
Cloud	12.5	Labette	30.6	Saline	74.4
Coffey	13.2	Lane	2.2	Scott	7
Comanche	2.1	Leavenworth	178.9	Sedgwick	527.1
Cowley	30.6	Lincoln	4	Seward	33.4
Crawford	66.3	Linn	16.5	Shawnee	326.2
Decatur	3	Logan	2.5	Sheridan	2.7
Dickinson	21.8	Lyon	37.6	Sherman	5.5
Doniphan	18.9	Marion	12.6	Smith	3.9
Douglas	263.2	Marshall	11.1	Stafford	5
Edwards	4.4	McPherson	33.4	Stanton	2.9
Elk	3.8	Meade	4	Stevens	7.1
Ellis	32.2	Miami	60.5	Sumner	19
Ellsworth	8.9	Mitchell	8.2	Thomas	7.3
Finney	28.9	Montgomery	48.2	Trego	3.1
Ford	30.8	Morris	7.7	Wabaunsee	8.8
Franklin	45.5	Morton	3.6	Wallace	1.6
Geary	92.8	Nemaha	14.1	Washington	6.1
Gove	2.5	Neosho	27.3	Wichita	2.9
Graham	2.7	Ness	2.5	Wilson	15.1
Grant	12.5	Norton	6	Woodson	6.2
Gray	6.6	Osage	22.2	Wyandotte	1,093.01

Source: Institute for Policy & Social Research, The University of Kansas; data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates, Vintage 2022.



kschildrenscabinet.org

STATE OF KANSAS

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 241 SOUTH
TOPEKA, KS 66612



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GOVERNOR LAURA KELLY

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 20-02

Reorganizing the Kansas Early Childhood Advisory Council

WHEREAS, Kansans recognize the value of high-quality early childhood experiences in preparing young children for success in school and life;

WHEREAS, investments in comprehensive, high-quality early childhood programs yield enormous economic benefits for future generations and local communities;

WHEREAS, in 2019 more than 6,000 Kansans engaged in the development of a comprehensive statewide needs assessment and strategic plan for early childhood;

WHEREAS, the Kansas State Board of Education's *Kansans Can* vision includes Kindergarten Readiness as one of five key outcomes for measuring success;

WHEREAS, achieving universal and equitable access to coordinated, high-quality, mixed-delivery programs serving children from birth to eight years of age requires enhanced alignment between systems serving young children and their families;

WHEREAS, the federal Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, 42 U.S.C. § 9837b(b)(1)(A), requires the governor of each state to designate or establish a State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care ("Advisory Council") as part of a parallel federal effort to ensure coordination and collaboration within the states;

WHEREAS, Executive Order 10-05 established the state's initial Early Childhood Advisory Council, charging it with specific coordination and collaboration responsibilities within the state's early childhood service delivery system;

WHEREAS, K.S.A. 38-1901 established the Kansas Children's Cabinet ("the Cabinet"), charging it – among other tasks – with assisting the Governor in developing a coordinated, comprehensive service delivery system to serve the children and families of Kansas, the identification of service gaps and the facilitation of interagency and interdepartmental cooperation toward the common goal of serving children and families; and

WHEREAS, the Early Childhood Advisory Council established by Executive Order 10-05 has no current members and has not been convened since 2014, making it effectively defunct.

NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority vested in me as Governor of the State of Kansas, I hereby rescind Executive Order 10-05 and designate the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund as the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care ("Advisory Council")

pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 9837b(b)(1)(A). The Advisory Council shall have the following duties and responsibilities.

1. The Advisory Council shall meet the criteria and carry out the duties and functions prescribed by relevant federal law, in addition to any responsibilities assigned to the Cabinet by the Governor, to include the following:
 - a. conduct a periodic statewide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs and services for children from birth to school entry, including an assessment of the availability of high-quality pre-kindergarten services for low-income children in the State;
 - b. identify opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among federally funded and State-funded child development, childcare, and early childhood education programs and services, including collaboration and coordination among State agencies responsible for administering such programs;
 - c. develop recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in existing federal, State, and local childcare and early childhood education programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations;
 - d. develop recommendations regarding the establishment of a unified data collection system for public early childhood education and development programs and services throughout the State;
 - e. develop recommendations regarding statewide professional development and career advancement plans for early childhood educators in the State;
 - f. assess the capacity and effectiveness of 2- and 4-year public and private institutions of higher education in the State toward supporting the development of early childhood educators, including the extent to which such institutions have in place articulation agreements, professional development and career advancement plans, and practice or internships for students to spend time in a Head Start or prekindergarten program; and
 - g. make recommendations for improvements in State early learning standards and undertake efforts to develop high-quality comprehensive early learning standards, as appropriate.
2. The Advisory Council shall hold public hearings and provide an opportunity for public comment on the activities described in paragraph 1 and shall submit a statewide strategic report addressing the activities described in paragraph 1 to the State Director of Head Start Collaboration and the Governor.
3. In order to support the Cabinet in fulfilling the duties outlined above, the Cabinet shall convene and maintain a panel ("the Panel") of volunteers with demonstrable early childhood expertise to operate at the pleasure of the Cabinet in an advisory role. The

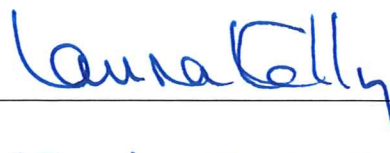
Executive Director of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust fund shall coordinate the activities of the Panel on behalf of the Cabinet.

4. The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund shall provide ongoing direction to the Panel, delineating areas in which it would benefit from the Panel's expertise and establishing responsibilities, governance, and reporting structures as it finds beneficial. The Cabinet shall annually appoint members to one-year terms of service on the Panel, with the option to reappoint and/or replace members by majority vote as the Cabinet sees fit. The Panel's membership shall include, to the maximum extent possible:
 - a. A representative of the Kansas Department for Children and Families or its successor agency;
 - b. A representative of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment;
 - c. Representatives of the Kansas State Department of Education representing early childhood education and early childhood special education;
 - d. One or more representatives of local school districts;
 - e. One or more representatives of institutions of higher education in the State;
 - f. One or more representatives of local providers of early childhood education and development services;
 - g. a representative from a Head Start agency located in the State
 - h. the State Director of Head Start Collaboration;
 - i. a parent of a young child currently receiving early childhood services from the state of Kansas;
 - j. representatives of other entities determined to be relevant by the Cabinet; and
 - k. other representatives as determined by the Governor.
5. Members of the Panel shall receive no compensation or reimbursements for expenses and shall serve voluntarily. Officers or employees of state agencies who are appointed to the Panel as part of their duties shall be authorized to participate on the Panel and may claim subsistence, allowance, mileage, or associated expenses from their respective agency budgets as permitted by law.
6. The Panel shall be subject to the Kansas Open Records Act and the Kansas Open Meetings Act.

This document shall be filed with the Secretary of State as Executive Order No. 20-02. It shall become effective immediately and remain in force until rescinded.

THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

BY THE GOVERNOR



DATED





Secretary of State



Assistant Secretary of State

KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL

Recommendations Panel Appointments
7/1/2024 – 6/30/2025



Executive Order 20-02 from Governor Laura Kelly established the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund as the State Advisory Council on Children's Education and Care (in accordance with Public Law 110-134 The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007) and created the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel as an advisory group appointed by the Children's Cabinet.

- **Panel Chair:** Cornelia Stevens, Executive Director, TOP Early Learning Centers
- **Panel Term:** One-Year Term from July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025
- **Meeting Details:** Monthly Meetings on 3rd Friday of the month, 9:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Overview of Review Process and Timeline

Apr 1 – May 3, 2024	Application period to apply to the Recommendations Panel. Application information was listed on the Children's Cabinet website and promoted at the Early Childhood Recommendation Panel April 15 meeting, on biweekly webinars and in the <i>All In for Kansas Kids</i> weekly email update. Required positions include: - Representative(s) of local school districts - Representative(s) of institutions of higher education in the State of Kansas - Representative(s) of local providers of early childhood education and development services - Representative(s) from Head Start agencies located in the State of Kansas, including migrant and seasonal Head Start programs and Indian Head Start programs - Parent(s) of a young child currently receiving early childhood services from the state of Kansas - Other representatives determined to be relevant by the Cabinet and as determined by the Governor
May 3 – 24	Applications reviewed by the Children's Cabinet staff for eligibility
June 7	Slate of recommendations, including selection of new Chair, submitted to the Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund Board for approval

June 7-17

Pending Children’s Cabinet and Trust Fund Board approval, Panel positions announced and communicated.

July 1

New members begin their one-year term, July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025.

FY25 Recommendations Panel Slate

Representatives of the
Kansas Department for
Children and Families

***Nichelle Adams**, Early Education and Child Care Services Assistant Director, Kansas Department for Children and Families
***Bethany Samuel**, QRIS Supports Manager, Kansas Department for Children and Families

Representatives of the
Kansas Department of
Health and Environment

***Jarvis Doleman**, Child Care Licensing Director, Kansas Department of Health and Environment
***Amy Dean-Campmire**, Children and Families Section Director, Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Representative of the
Kansas State Department of
Education, early childhood
education and early
childhood special education

***Natalie McClane**, Education Program Consultant, Kansas State Department of Education

Representative of the
Kansas Children’s Cabinet
and Trust Fund

***Christie Wyckoff**, Early Childhood Coordinator, Kansas Children’s Cabinet and Trust Fund

Representatives from Head
Start agencies located in
Kansas

***Sheila Hermocillo Bertelsen**, Education Specialist, Dodge City Public Schools, Bright Beginnings Early Childhood Center
Larry Lewis, Executive Director, Growing Futures Early Education Center
***Heather Schrotberger**, Executive Director, Kansas Head Start Association

State Director of Head Start
Collaboration

***Kim Kennedy**, Kansas Department for Children and Families

Representatives of local
school districts

Lisa Gehring, Superintendent, Plainville Jr/Sr High School
***Karen MacCrory**, School Readiness Specialist, Mitchell County Partnership for Children
***Leigh Anne Neal**, Chief of Early Education/Sustainability, USD 512 Shawnee Mission
Stephanie Waterman, Early Childhood Program Coordinator, Geary County Schools USD 475
Amber Wheeler, Superintendent, Humboldt USD 258

Representatives of institutions of higher education in the State of Kansas	*Mallory Arellano, Assistant Professor / Early Childhood Unified Program Coordinator, Newman University *Bronwyn Fees, Professor and Associate Dean, Kansas State University Cathy Gray, Lead Instructor/Early Childhood Education, Butler Community College Natalie Sollo, Associate Professor, MD, KU School of Medicine - Wichita
Parent of a young child currently receiving early childhood services from the state of Kansas	Stephanie Wiggins, Parent, Technical Assistance Specialist, KCCTO Infant Toddler Specialist Network
Representatives of local providers of early childhood care and education services	Turi Berger, Owner/Director, T.L.A.D. Learning Academy Janine Foth, Director, Cougar Cubs Daycare USD 397 Centre *Kelly Frantz-Langford, Director of Children's Services and Assistive Technology, TARC *Amy Gottschamer, Executive Director / Owner, Googols of Learning Child Development Center Teresa Houston, Director, Envision Inc. Early Childhood Development Center *Cheisa Myles, Owner, Blessed Assurance Daycare Charlotte Neuschafer, CACFP Director, Russel Child Development Center *Brett Schmidt, Executive Director, Learning Cross Inc. *Lisa Schmidt, Executive Director, Women's Community Y Child Development Center *Cornelia Stevens, Executive Director, TOP Early Learning Centers Mandy Waugh, Program Director, Child Start
Other Representatives	*Marites Altuna, Statewide Birth to 3 Program Coordinator for Vision Services, Kansas State School for the Blind *Brenda Bandy, Co-Executive Director, Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition, Inc *Dana Book, Training Specialist, Kansas Children's Service League *Kerri Falletti, Grassroots Strategy Developer, Kansas Department of Commerce – Office of Rural Prosperity Talia Juiliano-Myers, Provider Services Manager, Child Care Aware of Eastern KS *Hilary Koehn, Executive Director, Kansas Parents as Teachers Association *Tanya Koehn, Director of Families and Community Services, Child Care Aware of Kansas *Malissa Martin, President-CEO, SparkWheel, Inc. *Patty Peschel, Director, Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities *Tabatha Rosproy, Early Childhood Project Coordinator, Kansas Parent Information Resource Center *Marie Treichel, Program Manager, Kansas Association for Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health (KAIMH)

**2023-2024 Panel Member*

FY24 COMMUNITY-BASED CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION (CBCAP) GRANT

Summary and Funding Recommendations for Approval August 4, 2023



Overview of Renewal Timeline

June 5-July 12	Renewal Applications Submitted to Children's Cabinet
July 13 – August 1	Eligible applications reviewed for funding determination
August 4	Children's Cabinet reviews renewal grants
August/September	Notice of awards delivered pending Federal award notice
October 1	Federal fiscal year begins

Funding Recommendations

Applicant	FY23 Award	FY24 Funding Request	FY24 Proposed Funding*	Proposal Overview
Totals	\$1,319,274	\$1,326,159	\$1,319,274	
Elizabeth Layton Center	\$49,274	\$49,274	\$49,274	Circle of Security parenting program Miami Co. and Franklin Co.
Family Resource Center	\$163,191	\$170,176	\$163,191	Family Response Advocates parent support, case management and home visitation programs Crawford Co.
Kansas Children's Service League (PCAP)	\$195,477	\$195,477	\$195,477	Parent-Child Assistance Program (PCAP) - home visitation case management model for parents with prior substance abuse Shawnee Co.
Kansas Children's Service League (WCCAP & Crisis Nursery)	\$186,032	\$186,032	\$186,032	Crisis Nursery case management program and Wichita Coalition for Child Abuse Prevention (WCCAP) Sedgwick Co.
Kansas Children's Service League (statewide)	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	Public awareness, professional development, parent leadership and engagement All Counties Statewide
Pony Express Partnership for Children (PEPC)	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	Family support services including homeless prevention, case management and parent education. Marshall Co. and Washington Co.
The Family Conservancy	\$125,300	\$125,200	\$125,300	Parent education in two public housing communities Wyandotte Co.

Elizabeth Layton Center

- Project Title: Circle of Security
- Type of Application: Community Based
- County Served: Miami & Franklin
- CBCAP Renewal Amount: \$49,274
- Number of Children/Families to Be Served: 20/30

Abstract

CBCAP funding allows Elizabeth Layton Center (ELC) to provide screening and treatment services to identified at-risk families and caregivers in Miami and Franklin counties of Kansas. In collaboration with community agencies, ELC will evidenced-based programming to a minimum of 30 families in Circle of Security Parenting Programming and family therapy. gaining at least 30 stories entered into the Our Tomorrows project from our counties. ELC will offer Circle of Security programming to expectant parents and to parents of young children through age five. Those identified at-risk will be offered the Circle of Security Program to aid in increasing healthy attachments, to help reverse existing emotional and/or behavioral issues stemming from early adversity experiences, and to help to normalize stress responses in infants, children, and their care givers. Additionally, the childhood providers/teachers who work with at-risk young children will be offered participation in the Circle of Security Classroom Master Course.

Family Resource Center

- Project Title: Family Response Advocate
- Type of Application: Community Based
- County Served: Crawford
- CBCAP Renewal Amount: \$163,191
- Number of Children/Families to Be Served: 310/150

Abstract

The program takes place in Crawford County, located in the Southeast corner of the state. 150 at-risk families and 310 at-risk children will be served. Two primary strategies will be used in the program. The first strategy is the Response Advocates, a partnership with the City of Pittsburg, who work with families and their children through home visiting to keep children from being removed from the home. The strengthening Families and Attachment Biobehavioral Catch-Up models will be used during home visiting. The second strategy is to provide parent education to families and provide frontline personnel with training to help recognize child abuse and neglect. The outcomes are to have children remain in their homes and for families to provide safe, stable, nurturing environments so children can be ready to learn and succeed in life.

Kansas Children's Service League (PCAP)

- Project Title: Parent Child Assistance Program
- Type of Application: Community Based
- County Served: Shawnee
- CBCAP Renewal Amount: \$195,477
- Number of Children/Families to Be Served: 60/35

Abstract

Kansas Children's Service League's (KCSL) Parent-Child Assistance Program (PCAP) proposes serving 35 families with 60 children in Shawnee County during the fiscal year of 2023. PCAP includes early identification of substance using parents and intensive, in-home, weekly support to families facing multiple challenges with objectives to 1) prevent child maltreatment; 2) engage the parent into substance use assessment and treatment services; 3) provide recovery support and positive social connections; 4) increase positive parenting skills and parent-child interactions; and 5) improve child health and well-being. Anticipated outcomes are: 1) 95% of children will be screened for developmentally appropriate skills; 2) 80% of families will demonstrate a positive level of supports, family functioning, and attachment; 3) 95% of children will remain in their parent's home while in service; 4) 95% of parents will indicate a positive level of peer engagement and support. The requested funding amount for this project is \$195,477.00.

Kansas Children's Service League (WCCAP & Crisis Nursery)

- Project Title: Sedgwick County Wichita Coalition for Child Abuse Prevention (WCCAP) and Crisis Nursery Program
- Type of Application: Community Based
- County Served: Sedgwick
- CBCAP Renewal Amount: \$186,032
- Number of Children/Families to Be Served: 43/30

Abstract

Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL) is requesting funding for the Wichita Coalition for Child Abuse Prevention (WCCAP) and the Crisis Nursery program to serve an estimated 43 children in 30 families. WCCAP began in 2008 and serves as a collective impact project that brings together community agencies and individuals to raise awareness of child abuse prevention. The Crisis Nursery program began in 2012 through research and education of WCCAP members. The Crisis Nursery program is a case management program that provides quality childcare experiences as respite care for families who are facing an emergent situation that might jeopardize the safety and well-being of a child.

Kansas Children's Service League (statewide)

- Project Title: Prevent Child Abuse Kansas Chapter Statewide
- Type of Application: Statewide
- Counties Served: All Counties Statewide
- CBCAP Renewal Amount: \$400,000

Abstract

As the state's Prevent Child Abuse Kansas chapter, the Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL) seeks funding to provide statewide services and infrastructure for the prevention of child abuse and neglect. This work focuses on statewide activities that support systems change and a system of child and family well-being by providing education to professionals across the state; raising public awareness of child maltreatment prevention; promoting parent partnership, leadership & engagement, and connecting families to existing local services. This work is through the following programs with input from those with lived experience and with a focus on equity:

- Professional Education: Trauma-Informed Training (includes Period of PURPLE Crying and The Governor's Conference for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect)
- Public Awareness Campaigns: Child Abuse Prevention Campaigns
- Parent Partnership, Leadership and Engagement: Circle of Parents (includes Parent Leadership Conference and Kansas Statewide Parent Leadership Advisory Council)
- Connecting Families to Existing Local Services: 1-800-CHILDREN

Pony Express Partnership for Children

- Project Title: PCEP Family Support Program
- Type of Application: Community Based
- Counties Served: Marshall & Washington
- CBCAP Renewal Amount: \$200,000
- Number of Children/Families to Be Served: 750/430

Abstract

PEPC will provide Family Support Services to at-risk families with children ages 0-5, including prenatal supports. These services will include long-term rental assistance to homeless families and those at-risk of homelessness, home visitation with comprehensive case management, early intervention screenings, individualized parenting education, resource and referral, and quality childcare for second-shift working parents. It is PEPC's goal through these supports to reduce risk factors for children, increase protective factors in families, and reduce overall child abuse and neglect in Marshall and Washington Counties.

The Family Conservancy

- Project Title: Healthy Parents, Healthy Kids
- Type of Application: Community Based
- County Served: Wyandotte
- CBCAP Renewal Amount: \$125,300
- Number of Children/Families to Be Served: 130/120

Abstract

The Family Conservancy's Healthy Parents, Healthy Kids program assists families in Wyandotte County's public housing communities in adopting new, constructive ways of relating as adults within their families and community, and as parents or caregivers of young children. For the FY24 program year, Healthy Parents, Healthy Kids will serve approximately 130 children and 120 parents/caregivers living in Wyandotte County public housing communities. Healthy Parents, Healthy Kids is composed of three major components: Incredible Years® programming (parent training); Conscious Fathering classes (preparing for the challenges of fatherhood); and Child of Mine (prenatal and infant care education). Outcomes for each component of programming are tied to the Kansas Children's Cabinet Blueprint for Early Childhood as evidenced in the attached logic model.

EARLY CHILDHOOD BLOCK GRANT (ECBG) 2025-2026 (SFY26)

Summary and Funding Recommendations
Approved April 4, 2025



OVERVIEW

PROPOSAL SUMMARY

Total Applications Received: **44**

Funding Requested: **\$41,348,103.56**

Grantees Recommended for Funding: **25**

Funding Recommendation: **\$23,036,428.37**

November 18, 2024	Application Opens on Kansas CommonApp Portal
November 22, 2024	RFP & Application Webinar
January 8, 2025	Applications Due
Jan 8 – Mar 27, 2025	Application Review Period
April 4, 2025	Children's Cabinet reviews and approves recommendations for 2025-2026 ECBG grant awards
April 7 – 11, 2025	Notice of pending awards emailed to recipients
May or June 2025	Once the Legislature has approved the state budget, Grant Award Contracts will be emailed out to complete.
7/1/25 – 6/30/26	Grant & Evaluation Year

Funding Recommendations

Applicant	SFY25 Funding	SFY26 Recommendation
Total	\$22,800,000	\$23,036,428.37
<u>Child Advocacy and Parenting Services (CAPS)</u>	\$1,034,660	\$1,138,126.00
<u>Early Childhood Collective of Douglas County</u> (formerly Success by Six of Douglas County – SB6)	\$1,018,285	\$820,236.66
<u>Family Resource Center, Inc.</u>	\$1,861,888	\$2,048,076.80
<u>Four County Mental Health Center</u>	\$472,209	\$451,864.00
<u>Growing Futures Early Education Center</u>	\$510,642	\$1,021,284.00
<u>Junction City Family YMCA</u>	\$463,085	\$495,000.00
<u>LiveWell Northwest Kansas – Smart Start</u>	\$496,634	\$516,792.02
<u>Phillipsburg Child Care Center (PCCC)</u>	\$100,911	\$111,002.10
<u>Riley County Health Department – Raising Riley</u>	\$911,757	\$911,757.00
<u>Russell Child Development Center (RCDC)</u>	\$2,569,565	\$2,371,160.14
<u>The Family Conservancy (TFC) – Start Young</u>	\$1,790,383	\$1,761,515.65
<u>TOP Early Learning Centers</u>	\$2,962,684	\$2,962,684.00
<u>Tree House Early Education Foundation</u>	\$200,000	\$220,000.00
<u>United Way of Kaw Valley – Capital Area Successful Start (CASS)</u>	\$2,530,492	\$2,526,561.75
<u>United Way of Reno County</u>	\$922,906	\$883,620.93
<u>United Way of the Plains</u> (application combined with KCSL for FY26)	\$1,175,368	\$1,175,368.00
<u>USD 273 Beloit – Mitchell County Partnership for Children (MCPC)</u>	\$414,500	\$426,837.00
<u>USD 293 Quinter</u>	\$151,730	\$166,097.00
<u>USD 298 Lincoln</u>	\$127,396	\$127,396.00
<u>USD 445 Coffeyville</u>	\$790,848	\$743,505.00
<u>USD 450 Shawnee Heights</u>	\$360,504	\$188,268.00
<u>USD 489 Hays – Connections Preschool</u>	\$380,733	\$243,876.00
<u>USD 500 Kansas City</u>	\$1,167,047	\$1,258,930.00
New Proposed Grantee <u>Finney County Childcare & Early Learning Network, Inc.</u>	N/A	\$141,789.50
New Proposed Grantee <u>KidZone Learning Center of Wyandotte County, Inc.</u>	N/A	\$324,680.82

Project Overviews

Child Advocacy and Parenting Services

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** North Central - Ellsworth & Saline
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 735
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 645
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Child Care, Pre-K, Classroom Materials and Curriculum, Parent Education, Home Visiting
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** Smoky Hill Child Care Foundation
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 84% of families had one or more risk factors.
 - 89% of Pre-K children were on track in language comprehension in the spring.

Early Childhood Collective of Douglas County

(formerly Success by Six of Douglas County)

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** Northeast - Douglas
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 330
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 350
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Children, Child Care, Classroom Materials and Curriculum, Parent Education, Case Management
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** Positive Bright Start
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 95% of families had one or more risk factors and 74% had three or more.
 - 80% of environments were observed to meet high quality standards.

Family Resource Center, Inc (FRC)

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** Southeast - Allen, Bourbon, Cherokee, Crawford, Labette, Neosho
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 884
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 864
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Children, Child Care, Pre-K, Classroom Materials and Curriculum, Parent Education, Home Visiting, Case Management
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** Community Health Center of SE KS, Growing Place Child Care Center, Mercy Hospital, USD 234 Fort Scott, USD 249 Frontenac, USD 250 Pittsburg, USD 404 Riverton, USD 506 Labette, USD 508 Baxter
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 96% of families had one or more risk factors.
 - 82% of children were on track in early communication.

Four County Mental Health Center

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** SE & South Central - Chautauqua, Cowley, Elk, Montgomery, Wilson
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 135
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 135
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Children, Parent Education
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** None
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 99% of families served had one or more risk factors and 56% had three or more risk factors.
 - 85% of caregivers displayed positive parenting at the end of the parent education program.

Growing Futures Early Education Center

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** Northeast - Johnson
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 227
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 193
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Pre-K, Classroom Materials and Curriculum, Home Visiting
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** None
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 100% of families had one or more risk factors and 75% had three or more.
 - 90% of caregivers displayed positive parenting at the end of the parent education program.

Junction City Family YMCA

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** North Central - Geary
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 160
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 120
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Parent Education, Home Visiting
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** None
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 99% of families had one or more risk factors.
 - 42% increase in parents who displayed positive parenting skills by the end of services.

LiveWell Northwest Kansas – Smart Start

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** NW & North Central – Decatur, Ellis, Gove, Graham, Logan, Norton, Phillips, Rawlins, Sheridan, Sherman, Smith, Thomas, Trego, Wallace
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 341
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 341
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Children, Child Care, Classroom Materials and Curriculum, Parent Education, Home Visiting
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** None
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 88% of families had one or more risk factors.
 - 94% of classrooms were observed to meet high quality standards.

Phillipsburg Child Care Center (PCCC)

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** Northwest – Phillips
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 30
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 30
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Child Care, Pre-K, Classroom Materials and Curriculum,
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** None
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 67% of families had one or more risk factors.
 - 100% of Pre-K children were on track in numeracy.

Riley County Health Department- Raising Riley

- **Type of Application:** Kansas County and City Governments
- **Counties Served:** Northeast - Riley
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 111
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 106
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Child Care, Pre-K, Classroom Materials and Curriculum, Parent Education
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** USD 383 Manhattan-Ogden
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 99% of families had one or more risk factors.
 - 67% of Pre-K children were on track in phonological awareness, which was the highest percentage in any ECBG program.

Russell Child Development Center (RCDC)

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** Southwest - Clark, Finney, Ford, Grant, Gray, Greeley, Hamilton, Haskell, Hodgeman, Kearny, Lane, Meade, Morton, Ness, Scott, Seward, Stanton, Stevens, Wichita
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 1,186
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 1,186
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Child Care, Classroom Materials and Curriculum, Parent Education, Home Visiting, Case Management
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** USD 443 Dodge City
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 89% of families had one or more risk factors.
 - 45% increase in children on track in language comprehension from fall (30%) to spring (75%).

The Family Conservancy (TFC) – Start Young

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** Northeast - Wyandotte
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 620
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 527
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Children, Child Care, Classroom Materials and Curriculum
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** Child Care Aware of Kansas, Juniper Gardens Children's Project, Mid-America Regional Council
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 88% of families had one or more risk factors and 52% had three or more.
 - 62% of children were on track in early communication by spring.

TOP Early Learning Centers

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** South Central - Sedgwick
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 400
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 400
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Child Care, Pre-K, Classroom Materials and Curriculum, Parent Education, Case Management
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** Kansas Children's Service League, Rainbows United, USD 260 Derby
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 96% of families had one or more risk factors.
 - 100% of caregivers displayed positive parenting by the end of the program.

Tree House Early Education Foundation

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** Southeast - Chautauqua, Elk, Labette, Montgomery, Neosho, Wilson
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 44
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 44
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Child Care, Classroom Materials and Curriculum, Case Management
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** None
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 91% of families had one or more risk factors.
 - 100% of classrooms were observed to meet quality standards.

United Way of Kaw Valley – Capital Area Successful Start (CASS)

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** Northeast - Shawnee
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 1,074
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 947
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Special Needs Services for Children, Child Care, Pre-K, Classroom Materials and Curriculum, Parent Education, Home Visiting
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas, Community Action, Family Service & Guidance Center, Kansas Children's Service League, Shawnee County Health Department, TARC, USD 501 Topeka Public Schools
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 89% of families had one or more risk factors.
 - 28% increase in proficiency in early communication from fall to spring.

United Way of Reno County

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** South Central - Reno
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 890
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 550
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Special Needs Services for Children, Child Care, Classroom Materials and Curriculum, Home Visiting, Case Management
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** Build Me Up, Hadley Child Care Center, Kansas Children's Service League, Reno County Education Coop, USD 308 Hutchinson, USD 310 Fairfield, USD 311 Pretty Prairie, USD 312 Haven
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 87% of families had one or more risk factors.
 - 71% of 3-year-old children were on track in emergent literacy by spring.

United Way of the Plains

(application combined with KCSL for FY26)

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** South Central - Sedgwick
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 330
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 330
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Children, Child Care, Pre-K, Classroom Materials and Curriculum, Parent Education, Home Visiting
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** Kansas Children's Service League, Rainbows United, USD 259 Wichita, USD 261 Haysville, USD 266 Maize, YMCA of Greater Wichita
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 93% of families had one or more risk factors, and 55% had three or more.
 - 71% of children achieved proficiency on the DECA by spring.
 - 28% increase of children on track in life skills development by the spring.

USD 273 Beloit – Mitchell County Partnerships for Children (MCPC)

- **Type of Application:** Kansas Unified School District (USD) – NOT currently receiving Kansas Preschool Pilot (KPP) funding from the Kansas State Department of Education
- **Counties Served:** North Central – Cloud, Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Osborne
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 250
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 250
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Child Care, Classroom Materials and Curriculum, Parent Education
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** None
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 71% of families had one or more risk factors.
 - 96% of classrooms were observed to meet high quality standards.

USD 293 Quinter

- **Type of Application:** Kansas Unified School District (USD) – NOT currently receiving Kansas Preschool Pilot (KPP) funding from the Kansas State Department of Education
- **Counties Served:** Northwest – Gove, Sheridan, Trego
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 30
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 30
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Pre-K, Classroom Materials and Curriculum
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 88% of families had one or more risk factors.
 - 92% of Pre-K children were on track in language comprehension.

USD 298 Lincoln

- **Type of Application:** Kansas Unified School District (USD) – NOT currently receiving Kansas Preschool Pilot (KPP) funding from the Kansas State Department of Education
- **Counties Served:** North Central - Lincoln
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 44
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 44
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Child Care, Pre-K, Classroom Materials and Curriculum
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** Mitchell County Partnership for Children
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 78% of families had one or more risk factors.
 - 100% of Pre-K classrooms were observed to meet high quality standards.

USD 445 Coffeyville

- **Type of Application:** Kansas Unified School District (USD) – NOT currently receiving Kansas Preschool Pilot (KPP) funding from the Kansas State Department of Education
- **Counties Served:** Southeast - Montgomery
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 168
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 168
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Child Care, Pre-K, Classroom Materials and Curriculum
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** Coffeyville Coalition for Early Education
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 94% of families had one or more risk factors and 57% had three or more.
 - 100% of Pre-K classrooms were observed to meet high quality standards.

USD 450 Shawnee Heights

- **Type of Application:** Kansas Unified School District (USD) – NOT currently receiving Kansas Preschool Pilot (KPP) funding from the Kansas State Department of Education
- **Counties Served:** Northeast - Shawnee
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 70
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 70
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Pre-K, Classroom Materials and Curriculum
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** None
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 81% of families had one or more risk factors.
 - 93% of children were on track in life skills development by spring.

USD 489 Hays – Connections Preschool

- **Type of Application:** Kansas Unified School District (USD) – NOT currently receiving Kansas Preschool Pilot (KPP) funding from the Kansas State Department of Education
- **Counties Served:** Northwest - Ellis
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 64
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 64
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Pre-K, Classroom Materials and Curriculum
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** Behavior Solutions, LLC
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 100% of families had one or more risk factors and 67% had three or more.
 - 81% of Pre-K children were on track in numeracy.

USD 500 Kansas City – Project SPARK

- **Type of Application:** Kansas Unified School District (USD) – NOT currently receiving Kansas Preschool Pilot (KPP) funding from the Kansas State Department of Education
- **Counties Served:** Northeast - Wyandotte
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 120
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 120
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Pre-K, Classroom Materials and Curriculum
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** None
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - 100% of families had one or more risk factors and 82% had three or more.
 - 26% increase in children on track in numeracy reaching 71% in the spring.

Finney County Childcare & Early Learning Network, Inc.

(NEW PROPOSED GRANTEE)

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** Southwest - Finney, Gray, Haskell, Kearny, Scott
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 50
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 50
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Child Care, Classroom Materials and Curriculum
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** Garden Academy Early Learning Center
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - N/A

KidZone Learning Center of Wyandotte, Inc.
(NEW PROPOSED GRANTEE)

- **Type of Application:** Kansas 501(C)(3)
- **Counties Served:** Northeast - Johnson, Wyandotte
- **Estimated Children to be Served:** 253
- **Estimated Families to be Served:** 200
- **ECBG Programs and Services Proposed:** Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Children, Child Care, Classroom Materials and Curriculum
- **Named Partners in Proposal:** HopeBound Counseling, Inc.
- **Service Reach and Impact Highlights:**
 - N/A



Child Care Capacity Accelerator grants are creating new, licensed child care slots across Kansas in 2024 and 2025.

Funds support **construction projects** and **operational costs** for start-up or scale-up. Because construction dollars are typically ineligible on government grants, the Accelerator is a rare and significant opportunity for increasing child care capacity across Kansas.

Accelerator grants are possible through **braided funding** streams from multiple state agencies. Because each source has unique opportunities and limitations, the mix of funding available through the Accelerator supports communities in meeting their full range of complex needs.

\$54.5 million

in Accelerator funding will create...

5,655 new slots

when combined with more than...

\$58 million

in match generated locally by grantees through community fundraising, land/building donations, and local financing partners.

FUNDING STREAMS

- **Federal Preschool Development Birth-5 planning grant** through the Administration for Children and Families.

\$1 million

- **The State Fiscal Recovery Fund of the American Rescue Plan** approved by the Kansas SPARK Executive Committee and State Finance Council.

\$20 million

- **The Patterson Family Foundation** private gift.

\$2.5 million

- **Federal Child Care Development Block Grant ARPA funds** through the Kansas Department for Children and Families.

\$31 million



COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Grantees are collaborating with a wide range of community partners, including:

- School districts
- Existing child care providers
- Local employers
- Construction companies and architects
- Chambers of Commerce and economic development groups
- Local philanthropic and faith-based entities
- County and city officials
- Community-based services such as libraries, community centers, and training partners

MEETING THE DEMAND

On average, grantees will be meeting 17% of the child care demand in their communities using Accelerator funding. However, these demand figures ranged widely, for example, the grant is helping to meet...

- 62% of the need in Allen County
- 41% of the need in Rawlins County
- 18% of the need in Dickinson County
- 8% of the need in Shawnee County
- 14% of the need in Ellis County
- 75% of the need in Sheridan County

INNOVATION COMMUNITIES

Sixteen Accelerator grantees were also selected to be part of an Innovation Communities cohort. Cohort members were given small grants and coaching support to test unique, custom approaches, such as:

- Establishing employer-sponsored child care and similar public-private partnership models
- Creating substitute pools to help home- and center-based programs maintain operations when a staff member calls in sick or a home-provider needs to be away for training
- Partnering with school districts to offer child care staff access to health and retirement benefits

ACCELERATOR IMPACT

\$650,646

- average grant per community

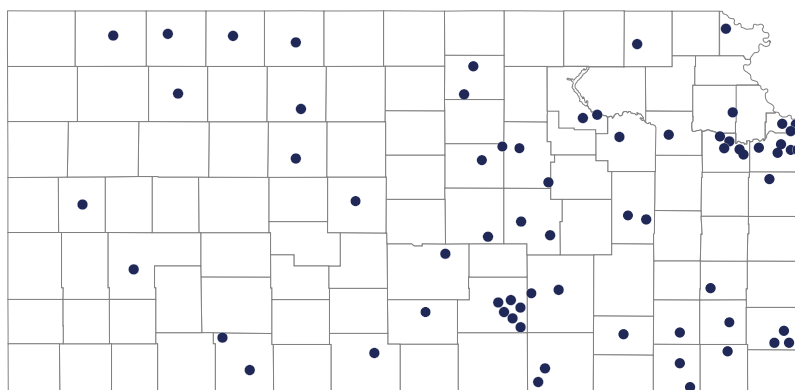
5,655 new licensed slots

63 communities

- 36 rural
- 27 urban

96 child care facilities

- 82 licensed as child care centers
- 13 licensed as group day care homes
- 1 licensed as a small-center pilot



CHILD CARE CAPACITY ACCELERATOR

Summary and Funding Recommendations Approved
June 23, 2023 and October 6, 2023



Overview

ACCELERATOR PROPOSAL SUMMARY

- **Total Proposals Received: 142**
 - Round 1: **105** Full Accelerator Submissions plus **40** Innovation Community Add-on Proposals
 - Round 2: **37** Full Accelerator Submissions
- **Total Funding Requested: \$140.6 million**
 - Round 1: **\$124 million**
(*\$117 million for full Accelerator projects plus \$7 million for Innovation Community proposals*)
 - Round 2: **16.6 million**
- **Total Funding Available: \$54.5 million**
 - Round 1: **\$43.5 million**
(*\$20 million SPARK, \$20 million CCDF-ARPA, \$1 million PDG Planning, \$2.5 million in collaboration support from the Patterson Family Foundation*)
 - Round 2: **\$11 million**
(*additional funding for operations only from CCDF ARPA Discretionary Funds made available on 9/7/2023*)
- **Total Awards Approved: 77 (65 unique grantees)**
 - Round 1: **52** Awards (1 later declined)
 - Round 2: **27** Awards (including 15 new grantees and 12 returning)
- **Estimated number of new child care slots created: 5,655**

This grant opportunity was made possible by funding allocations from four sources:

- \$20 million in Strengthening People and Revitalizing Kansas (SPARK) funds allocated by the state legislature (American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State Fiscal Recovery Fund)
- \$31 million in Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) ARPA Discretionary Fund made available by Department for Children and Families (DCF)

- \$1 million in Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Planning grant funds awarded to Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund (KCCTF)
- \$2.5 million in collaboration support from the Patterson Family Foundation

As stated in the RFP, the Child Care Capacity Accelerator (CCCA) grants are intended to *"support communities in creating sustainable, high-quality child care. Funding is intended for communities positioned to make transformational investments in child care and early learning solutions that will impact generations to come. In doing so, it will support economic growth, meet the needs of local businesses, create new jobs with better compensation (living wages) for early educators, and support workforce participation by families with young children."*

The Child Care Innovation Communities piloted innovative strategies to expand child care capacity in six categories: Infant/Toddler Incentives, Child Care Plus Models, Workforce Recruitment and Retention, Non-Traditional Service Hours or Targeted Populations, Rural Child care, and Public/Private Funding Partnership. Grantees participated in a 12-month cohort program from July 2023-June 2024 that involved co-creation and peer learning sessions, regular data reporting and evaluation efforts, and monthly coaching sessions.

The north star throughout the process – both in advising applicants and in reviewing applications – was the use of these dollars to create more sustainable, licensed child care seats across the state and accelerate the capacity-building and innovative efforts of Kansas communities.

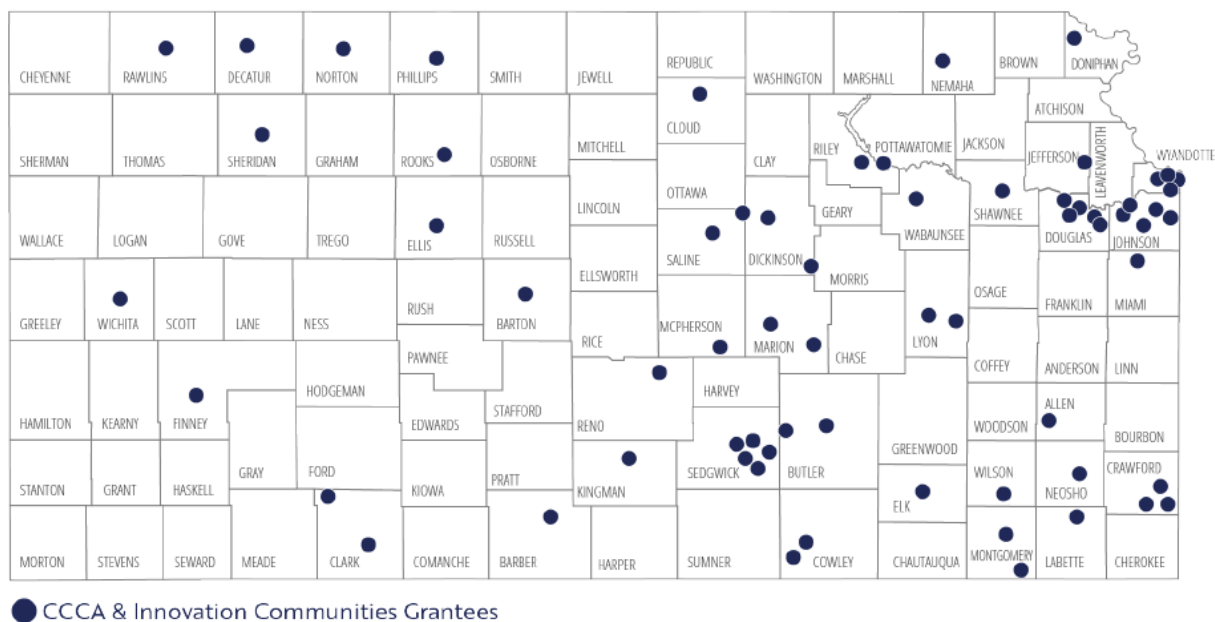
The KCCTF team worked closely with DCF, KDHE, KSDE, Kansas Commerce, and the team at Child Care Aware of Kansas, to ensure other available construction funding across the state was being leveraged and award recommendations aligned with allowable expense guidelines for each of the funding sources involved in the RFP. Project viability, geographic diversity and an emphasis on community-driven solutions to the child care crisis were factored in to the review process.

Timeline

Feb 20, 2023	Letter of Interest Due
Mar 10	RFP Released and Kansas CommonApp portal open
Apr 4	Information released on Innovation Community Add-on
Mar-Apr	Technical Assistance Webinars
May 15	Round 1 Application Deadline
May 16 – Jun 9	Round 1 Application Review Period
Jun 23	Round 1 KCCTF Board Approval

July 1	Round 1 Grant Year Begins
Sept 13	Round 2 - Invitation to existing all CCCA applicants (successful and unsuccessful) to submit projects that meet CCCA original RFP operations-only criteria via abbreviated application process
Sept 25	Round 2 Application deadline
Sept 25-29	Round 2 Application Review Period
Oct 6	Round 2 KCCTF Board Approval

Funding Recommendations



Blue = Received CCCA funds from the original funding round June 23, 2023

Green = Innovation Community Add-On

Some applicants applied for and received both an Accelerator and Innovation Community grant. To be eligible for an Innovation Community Add-on, an applicant needed to meet criteria and apply for a full Accelerator grant.

Orange = Received CCCA funds from additional round 2 funding October 6, 2023

All applicants responded to the invitation to submit an abbreviated application for the additional \$11 million Child Care Capacity Accelerator Grant opportunity that closed on September 25, 2023. Some existing grantees were awarded additional funds beyond their previous funding awarded on Jun 23, 2023.

North Central Region				
<i>Applicant</i>	<i>Funding Request</i>	<i>Proposed Funding</i>	<i>Slots Added</i>	<i>Proposal Overview</i>
Herington Community Child Care Center	\$267,872	\$267,872	24	Center expansion on USD property
Solomon Early Learning Center	\$386,760	\$346,716	21	Led by USD, 3 additional classrooms with staff as KPERS employees
Solomon Early Learning Center	\$55,620	\$55,620	NA	Adding Infant/Toddler Slots through targeted staff training and a substitute pool
Abilene Child Care Learning Center	\$248,880	\$248,880	55	3 centers collaborating on workforce supports and finishes on renovation
Abilene Child Care Learning Center	\$250,000	\$250,000	NA	Expand existing substitute program for child care programs
Abilene Childcare Learning Center	\$ 181,493	\$181,493	8	Improvement of ADA accessibility and retention/professional development bonuses offered to staff
Salina Area United Way	\$2,027,100	\$1,872,100	187	United Way as fiscal lead; expanding size of three existing centers to serve more children
Salina Area United Way	\$316,500	\$316,500	39	Construction/start-up costs for 3 new centers and additional slots at a 4 th center
Cloud County Community College – Children’s Learning Center	\$14,500	\$14,500	19	Recruitment bonuses to grow an existing center
North Central	Region Total	\$3,553,681	353	
South Central Region				
<i>Applicant</i>	<i>Funding Request</i>	<i>Proposed Funding</i>	<i>Slots Added</i>	<i>Proposal Overview</i>
Little’s Early Learning - E9 Properties LLC	\$372,690	\$336,469	54	Private Center expansion with close relationships with USD; near future Integra computer chip facility
Little’s Early Learning - E9 Properties LLC	\$612,800	\$612,800	32	6 locations shifting from part-time care to year-round care
Reno County Child Care Task Force	\$2,173,887	\$2,145,834	308	County Task Force as lead supporting a collaborative effort involving 6 organizations and 8 distinct projects/facilities to expand child care

Reno County Child Care Task Force	\$247,600	\$247,600	NA	Infant/Toddler incentives for local providers and workforce training efforts
Reno County Child Care Task Force	\$146,180	\$146,180	64	Collaborative effort to expand infant/toddler slots, and extend care to full day for 3-year-olds
Advancing Barton County Children, Inc.	\$3,466,872	\$2,238,630	177	Construct 2 of 3 new child care facilities across 3 communities in Barton County
Advancing Barton County Childcare	\$ 422,699	\$422,699	21	Sped up timeline to increase capacity sooner
Walnut Valley Learning Center – Creekstone Farms Premium Beef	\$500,000	\$500,000	116	New center operating expanded hours to support Creekstone employees and surrounding community
Flint Hills Child Care Coalition	\$377,280	\$377,280	28	New child care facility with support from USD and space provided by the city
Kids World Child Care Learning Center	\$1,746,426	\$1,746,426	60	Expansion of current child care facility into 7,000 sq. ft. facility serving low-income families
USD 331 Daycare Center	\$720,122	\$674,027	24	Licensing unused space in USD for two separate day care homes (commercial setting)
USD 331 Daycare Center	\$316,016	\$316,016	19	Opening of 2 Small Center Pilots, in collaboration with KDHE
McPherson County Child Care Task Force	\$1,145,000	\$245,000	152	Multi-phase approach to expanding the workforce, adding shared services, and supporting new facilities
McPherson County Child Care Task Force	\$250,000	\$250,000	NA	CTE supports, shared services among county providers, and exploration of public/private partnership for sustainability
McPherson County Child Care Task Force	\$1,116,272	\$639,108	29	Renovate, expand, and/or construct 3 centers in McPherson county
South YMCA Learning Center	\$251,000	\$251,000	13	Increase space to serve more infants and toddlers
Hillsboro Community Child Care Center	\$855,216	\$855,216	83	Adapting church building to create new child care facility
Tri County Child Care Coalition	\$1,725,004	\$1,725,004	198	Renovate and expand five new child care facilities across 3 counties (Barber, Harper, Kiowa)

Tri County Child Care Coalition	\$250,000	\$250,000	NA	Tri-county service and resource sharing, including toy bank, professional development, substitutes, etc.
Mindful Minis	\$250,000	\$250,000	NA	Special health care services (focused on mental health) for children and families in child care facility
Mindful Minis	\$368,962	\$368,962	58	Providing full day, full year care
Early Childhood Impact Center	\$225,250	\$225,250	NA	Multi-payer Share Care Fund Model (modeled after Michigan Tri-Share)
Alford Kids Academy	\$370,000	\$370,000	52	Offering care during non-traditional hours
Bethany Lutheran Early Childcare Center	\$109,054	\$109,054	32	Addition of a new infant classroom

South Central Region Total \$15,302,555 1,544

Northwest Region

<i>Applicant</i>	<i>Funding Request</i>	<i>Proposed Funding</i>	<i>Slots Added</i>	<i>Proposal Overview</i>
USD270 – Little Nests	\$319,212	\$236,120	12	Multi-phase initiative adding licensed group homes strategically throughout the community
USD 270 – Little Nests	\$138,865	\$138,865	NA	Establish substitute program for child care programs
Sheridan County Community Foundation	\$200,000	\$200,000	24	Support expansion of a duplex facility purchased specifically for two licensed child care spaces
USD 294 – Decatur County Child Care Coalition	\$73,829	\$73,829	12	Support new build close to USD; staff will receive KPERS benefits as USD staff
Rawlins County Economic Development	\$671,741	\$671,741	24	Renovated dental clinic to add two licensed facilities
Phillipsburg Child Care Center	\$200,162	\$200,162	30	Increasing capacity of existing center to serve more children
The Grove Child Care Center	\$2,000,000	\$170,000	77	New facility connected to a new multi-generational community center within a housing development
Rainbow Academy, LLC	\$65,310	\$65,310	18	Allowance of 3 fully enrolled centers

Northwest Region Total \$1,756,027 197

Southeast Region				
<i>Applicant</i>	<i>Funding Request</i>	<i>Proposed Funding</i>	<i>Slots Added</i>	<i>Proposal Overview</i>
Coffeyville Area Child Care Coalition	\$882,103	\$882,103	291	24-hour, 6 day/week care for second and third shift families
Erie Community Child Care	\$748,207	\$748,207	48	Opening second center with 4 large classrooms
Erie Community Child Care Center	\$216,600	\$216,600	48	Implement competitive wage and conscious discipline techniques
The Growing Place – Humboldt Daycare & Preschool, Inc.	\$1,237,017	\$1,162,017	48	Expansion of existing child care facility to serve more children, 81% of which will be infant/toddler slots
West Elk Early Child Center	\$1,182,268	\$1,182,268	60	Building new child care center in partnership with USD and SEK-CAP
Family Resource Center	\$1,637,795	\$1,637,795	58	Expansion of FRC space and wrap-around services to serve more families
Grow at Eden LLC	\$1,931,636	\$204,982	48	Expansion of existing child care facility to serve more children and add professional development
The Tree House Early Education Foundation	\$387,905	\$387,905	52	Support completion of a renovation to expand an existing child care facility serving low-income families
SugarCreek Child Care Center	\$3,000,000	\$2,000,000	206	Creation of new child care facility with mix of schedule to accommodate multiple shifts; ongoing business support
SugarCreek Child Care Center	\$80,370	\$80,370	NA	School district CTE and EC Pathway program. Will also offer PD and substitute pool for local providers.
USD 461 Neodesha Early Learning Center	\$2,491,053	\$2,491,053	99	New child care facility in Wilson County, in the works since 2017
USD 461 Neodesha Early Learning Center	\$250,000	\$250,000	NA	HS collaboration for internship/work-study/community-based training with local providers
USD 461 Neodesha Early Learning Center	\$403,450	\$199,204	99	Preparation to open new center once construction is completed
Emporia Area Chamber Foundation	\$551,936	\$551,936	136	Support recruitment of personnel and acquisition of necessary supplies/materials

Sonshine Childcare	\$385,168	\$385,168	48	Support child care and program staff while the newly constructed 10,000 sq. ft. facility reaches full capacity
USD 252	\$292,000	\$207,000	10	Environmental upgrades for outdoor play and indoor classroom spaces

Southeast Region Total \$12,586,608 1251

Southwest Region

Applicant	Funding Request	Proposed Funding	Slots Added	Proposal Overview
LIFT Minneola	\$530,300	\$530,300	24	Renovate existing building into two licensed child care facilities.
Grow & Learn Child Care Center	\$229,032	\$229,032	10	Worker recruitment to expand capacity
Jays Nest Day Care	\$412,756	\$412,756	11	Small center pilot approach to enable expansion of existing child care facility
Garden Academy Early Learning Center - Finney County Child Care and Early Learning Network	\$621,825	\$621,825	60	Support launch of new child care facility and expansion of early learning network

Southwest Region Total \$1,793,913 105

Northeast Region

Applicant	Funding Request	Proposed Funding	Slots Added	Proposal Overview
The Learning Experience Blue Valley	\$457,500	\$457,500	159	Final funding to support the opening of a new facility.
The Learning Experience - Blue Valley	\$275,000	\$275,000	13	Opening a new center to serve more children
Hilltop Child Development Center, Inc.	\$2,500,325	\$2,500,325	138	Support Hilltop expansion with new facility and operational supports.
The Kids Place - Integrated Behavioral Technologies, Inc.	\$220,442	\$220,442	12	Minor renovation and staff recruitment to add slots to existing infant/toddler capacity
Hope Chapel Legends	\$944,094	\$944,094	92	New facility with shared staff and training leveraged from sister facilities
Shawnee County Collaboration - Greater Topeka Partnership	\$2,836,613	\$2,762,113	451	New construction, renovation, and operational support to expand child care across 9 projects in the county

Shawnee County Collaboration – Greater Topeka Partnership	\$249,875	\$249,875	NA	HR and other shared resources for staffing supports across programs in the collaboration
Little Learners Early Childhood Center – Early Childhood Consultants	\$4,010,819	\$700,000	155	Expansion of existing facility to support community with high economic development growth
Little Learners Early Childhood Center – Early Childhood Consultants	\$72,611	\$72,611	NA	Professional Development/pathway supports for early childhood professionals in the area
Little Learners Early Childhood Center – Early Childhood Consultants	\$761,000	\$756,000	41	Remodeling upper level of current facility
Children’s Treehouse Learning Center	\$272,000	\$272,000	158	New facility build to expand capacity of an existing provider
Doniphan Darlings, Inc.	\$467,520	\$467,520	15	Completion of renovation on a center from former school building
Greater Manhattan Community Foundation	\$2,250,000	\$2,172,954	100	New building for a Child Care Business Incubator with shared professional development and business growth opportunities
Greater Manhattan Community Foundation	\$250,000	\$250,000	NA	Incubation model for child care, including cost sharing
Bright Beginnings Child Care Center	\$385,884	\$385,884	40	New 4-room center in Nemaha Co.
Delightful Village & Delight Ahead	\$113,498	\$108,698	85	Support completion of renovations to recently purchased facility to expand child care
Community Children’s Center	\$2,237,808	\$628,421	69	Community center renovation to add non-traditional hours and wraparound services
Community Children’s Center	\$250,000	\$250,000	NA	Non-traditional services hours w/ drop-in and scheduled care options. Employer sponsored child care fund and spot securing
Success by Six	\$63,103	\$63,103	NA	Targeted Family Navigation supports to help BIPOC families access child care
USD 367 and United Way of Miami County	\$250,000	\$250,000	NA	Mentorship program for new hires; staff training; compensation package exploration
Great Adventures LLC	\$1,279,400	\$1,279,400	180	Construct 1 new child care facility
KidZone Learning Center of Overland Park, Inc.	\$490,528	\$490,528	88	Construct 1 new child care center, classrooms to be opened at the time of enrollment

Open Minds Child Development Center, LLC	\$897,060	\$847,060	53	Start-up of newly constructed center in Johnson County
Outlook Academy	\$465,000	\$409,000	90	Final phase of 3-year renovation project
Parkwood Day School Eudora	\$983,731	\$983,731	54	Additional slots across programs operating in 3 counties (Leavenworth, Douglas, Johnson)
Parkwood Day School of KCK	\$696,750	\$696,750	55	Expansion of 2 inclusive licensed programs
Raising Wildflowers	\$150,000	\$150,000	83	Opening 2 new centers in Junction City and Manhattan
The Heritage Home	\$270,000	\$270,000	38	Renovate and update a prior nursing home facility to create an intergenerational facility for child care and senior living
USD 491 Eudora	\$175,000	\$160,000	60	Extend program hours and provide year-round child care
Northeast	Region Total	\$19,073,009	2,229	
Total Proposed Funding and Slots		\$43,593,294	5,655	

Herington Community Child Care Center

Overview

The Herington Community Child Care Center is one of several projects in Dickinson County, all of which are considering their impact on each other and the total care system. This project will add 24 needed seats. The project is led by the school district and will be on district property. The Herington Community Child Care Center has a goal of having all their staff either degreed or credentialed with a CDA by August 2024. The leadership and commitment shown by the School District to ensure the success of the project provides assurance of long-term viability. (Application # 3793)

- City: **Herington**
- County: **Dickinson**
(North Central Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$354,245**
- Accelerator Request: **\$267,872**
- Accelerator Award: **\$267,872**
- New Slots Added: **24**
- Project Impact on County: **8% total child care slots needed**

Solomon Early Learning Center

Accelerator Overview

One of several projects in Dickinson County, all of which consider their impact on each other and the total care system. The Solomon Early Learning Center is led by USD 393, with a goal of working together with the other Dickinson County projects to meet the needs of their communities. Their 3 classrooms will serve 24 children or more, depending on ages of children enrolled. They have made the decision to employ staff as KPERS employees with the attached benefits. (Application # 3800)

Innovation Communities

Training opportunities to increase provider qualifications for providing infant and toddler care. Additionally, the center will explore the development of a center substitute pool and leverage mentorship opportunities through a local high school career pathways program.

- City: **Solomon**
- County: **Dickinson**
(North Central Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$1,018,444**
- Accelerator Request: **\$386,760**
- Accelerator Award: **\$346,716**
- New Slots Added: **21**
- Project Impact on County: **7% total child care slots needed**
- Innovation Communities Award: **\$55,620**
- Innovation Categories: **Infant/Toddler Incentives and Workforce Recruitment and Retention**

Abilene Child Care Learning Center

Accelerator Overview

This is a collaboration between three child care centers in Dickinson County (2 in Abilene and 1 in Herington) with a total capacity of 209. These centers have a long-standing commitment to quality child care in Dickinson County. Discovery Child Care Learning Center has started an additional project and operational support will help purchase required equipment and supplies for when the project is complete. Project will also increase wages for all existing teachers through a bonus retention program. An important innovation of this project team is their regional sub-pool, "Customized Early Education". (Application # 3837)

Innovation Communities

Abilene Child Care Learning Center established a child care substitute pool model in 2022. They will expand this model to other communities through the project funding in partnership with Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas. They will continue outreach for additional partnership opportunities during the project period to reach more communities around the state.

- City: **Abilene & Herington**
- County: **Dickinson**
(North Central Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$331,840**
- Accelerator Request: **\$248,880**
- Accelerator Award: **\$248,880**
- New Slots Added: **55**
- Project Impact on County: **18% total child care slots needed**
- Innovation Communities Award: **\$250,000**
- Innovation Categories: **Workforce Recruitment and Retention**

Abilene Childcare Learning Center

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 Existing Grantee)

Abilene Childcare Learning Center will see some much-needed improvements when it comes to ADA accessibility thanks to additional operations funds. They also plan to offer retention and professional development bonuses to staff while increasing total capacity by eight slots. (Application # 3837)

- City: **Abilene, Herington**
- County: **Dickinson**
(North Central Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$181,493**
- Accelerator Award: **\$181,493**
- New Slots Added: **8**

Salina Area United Way

Overview

The Salina Area United Way is applying on behalf of the Salina Family YMCA McAdams Center, which is opening a brand new location in an existing Montessori School. The project requires final funding to complete renovations. Additionally, they are also applying for St John's Kid Kare and Love N Learn child care centers that are doing renovations to expand their current facilities and child care capacity. With the renovations made to these 3 existing facilities, Saline County will be creating 187 new child care slots for the community. Partners include Dane G. Hansen Foundation, Schwan's, several churches, and the Salina Regional Hospital Foundation. (Application # 3844)

- City: **Saline**
- County: **Saline**
(North Central Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$3,163,965**
- Accelerator Request: **\$2,027,100**
- Accelerator Award: **\$1,872,100**
- New Slots Added: **187**
- Project Impact on County: **18% total child care slots needed**

Salina Area United Way

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 Existing Grantee)

With current accelerator funding, three centers are utilizing funding for construction and renovation to add 187 new slots. Operational funding will be utilized to assist with start-up costs at three centers and the addition of 39 new slots at a fourth center. (Application # 3844)

- City: **Salina**
- County: **Saline**
(North Central Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$316,500**
- Accelerator Award: **\$316,500**
- New Slots Added: **39**

Cloud County Community College – Children's Learning Center

Overview

The Cloud County Community College Children's Learning Center is a high impact facility with nearly four decades of experience in building a thriving and sustainable child care ecosystem. The Center will recruit and retain child care professionals with sign-on and retention bonuses and paid professional development opportunities. Additionally, the purchase and implementation of new, evidence-based curriculum will better serve children and improve teacher satisfaction. (Application # 4115)

- City: **Concordia**
- County: **Cloud**
(North Central Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$243,326**
- Accelerator Request: **\$14,500**
- Accelerator Award: **\$14,500**
- New Slots Added: **19**
- Project Impact on County: **13% total child care slots needed**

Little's Early Learning – E9 Properties LLC

Overview

Little's Early Learning is a private center with a strong partnership with Circle School District. This partnership includes providing wrap around child care for children in the district preschool from three elementary schools, as well as a career pathway for high school students. They provide care for children birth through after-school care. From a statewide economic development perspective, it is noteworthy that their facility is 4 miles from the planned Integra computer chip facility in Bel Aire. (*Application # 3801*)

- City: **Benton**
- County: **Butler**
(*South Central Region*)
- Total Project Budget: **\$740,190**
- Accelerator Request: **\$372,690**
- Accelerator Award: **\$336,469**
- New Slots Added: **54**
- Project Impact on County: **3% total child care slots needed**

Little's Early Learning – E9 Properties LLC

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 Existing Grantee)

With additional operating funds, Little's Early Learning can begin the process of moving care across six locations from part time care to year-round care. In addition, this funding will create 32 new infant and toddler slots while strengthening the existing partnership and latchkey program with Circle Public Schools. (*Application # 3801*)

- City: **Benton**
- County: **Butler**
(*South Central Region*)
- Accelerator Request: **\$612,800**
- Accelerator Award: **\$612,800**
- New Slots Added: **32**

Reno County Child Care Taskforce

Accelerator Overview

Under the leadership of the Chamber of Commerce, The Reno County Child Care Task Force has worked since 2017 to develop a collaborative, countywide project involving six partnering organizations and eight distinct projects to address child care capacity challenges in Reno County. Four of these projects are located in communities with less than 1,500 people, where licensed, quality child care providers are most scarce. The initiative includes five renovations and three new facilities, with the majority being existing providers offering expanded services and would serve over 300 children. (*Application # 3852*)

Innovation Communities

The Reno County Task Force will develop infant/toddler incentive and workforce training programs to help address gaps in local child care for young children. Local providers will be offered financial incentives to increase the number of infants in their facility or home. Additionally, local providers will have access to subsidized training opportunities to increase access to educational opportunities outside of business hours and reduce the financial burden of meeting training requirements on providers.

- City: **Hutchinson, Buhler, Haven, Pretty Prairie**
- County: **Reno**
(South Central Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$5,042,477**
- Accelerator Request: **\$2,173,887**
- Accelerator Award: **\$2,145,834**
- New Slots Added: **308**
- Project Impact on County: **16% total child care slots needed**
- Innovation Communities Award: **\$247,600**
- Innovation Categories: **Infant/Toddler Incentives and Workforce Recruitment and Retention**

Reno County Child Care Taskforce

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 Existing Grantee)

Reno County Child Care Taskforce will collaborate with USD 309 to establish new child care slots for infants and toddlers and extend care to full day for three-year-olds. In addition, this funding will increase child care slots at Central Christian Preschool and Child Care, an existing licensed center. A total of 64 new slots will be added to Reno County. (*Application # 3852*)

- City: **Hutchinson, Buhler, Haven, Pretty Prairie**
- County: **Reno**
(South Central Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$146,180**
- Accelerator Award: **\$146,180**
- New Slots Added: **64**

Advancing Barton County Children, Inc.

Overview

Advancing Barton County Children, Inc. is seeking to fully address Barton County child care and early childhood development needs. ABCC, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)3 charitable organization comprised of community members and has developed their strategy in response to evidence that child care is one of the most challenging obstacles for employers and employees to overcome. Their long-term plan is to construct (3) new, high quality child care centers in the communities of Great Bend, Hoisington, and Claflin. These centers will focus on providing the highest level of care, an elevated center appearance, a commitment to employee training and culture and, finally, care based on support, encouragement, and educational engagement for the youngest members of their community. The funding proposal will fund 2 of the 3 sites. (Application # 3932)

- City: **Hoisington, Great Bend**
- County: **Barton**
(South Central Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$5,461,104**
- Accelerator Request: **\$3,466,872**
- Accelerator Award: **\$2,238,630**
- New Slots Added: **177**
- Project Impact on County: **14% total child care slots needed**

Advancing Barton County Childcare

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 Existing Grantee, Plus SPARK)

With additional operating funds, Advancing Barton County Childcare will be able to add 21 slots to the two centers currently underway. This funding allows them to speed up their timeline and add much needed capacity sooner. (Application # 3932)

- City: **Hoisington, Great Bend**
- County: **Barton**
(South Central Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$422,699**
- Accelerator Award: **\$207,699 – CCDF**
\$215,000 – SPARK
- New Slots Added: **21**

Walnut Valley Learning Center – Creekstone Farms Premium Beef

Overview

The Walnut Valley Learning Center will serve primarily employees of Creekstone Farm's Premium Beef. With a dedicated staff of approximately 25, the center will operate from Monday to Friday starting at 5 am and closing at 6 pm, and occasionally on Saturdays. Creekstone employees can take advantage of a discounted tuition arrangement that enables seamless payment through payroll deduction. The center's staff members will receive highly competitive wages, along with a comprehensive benefits package that includes health insurance and paid time off. Designed to be a state-of-the-art facility, the Walnut Valley Learning Center aims to provide a child's "Home away from Home." In addition to its experienced staff, the center boasts an educational curriculum that guarantees high-quality care and learning opportunities. Creekstone Farms has invested \$3.6 million in the development and construction of the facility. (*Application # 3969*)

- City: **Arkansas City**
- County: **Cowley**
(South Central Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$3,604,946**
- Accelerator Request: **\$500,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$500,000**
- New Slots Added: **116**
- Project Impact on County: **12% total child care slots needed**

Flint Hills Child Care Coalition

Overview

The Flint Hills Child Care Center will open in Florence, KS to provide quality child care services for children aged 3 months to school-aged in the under-served area of the Flint Hills. Centrally located along Highways 77 and 50, the Center will offer child care services to residents from Marion, Chase, and northern Butler counties. The Center expects to open with an initial target of 15 students in Fall 2023 and expand to up to 28 students by the following year. This project has been developed with broad community support, including support from USD 408 and space provided by the City. (*Application # 4074*)

- City: **Florence**
- County: **Marion**
(South Central Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$503,586**
- Accelerator Request: **\$377,280**
- Accelerator Award: **\$377,280**
- New Slots Added: **28**
- Project Impact on County: **8% total child care slots needed**

Kids World Child Care Learning Center

Overview

For the last 14 years, Kids World has played a vital role in the Northeast Wichita area by providing high-quality child care services to low-income families. Their current facility will be expanded to 7600 sq. ft and is located in a high need, low-income community. This will add an additional 60 new seats which will allow them to support the needs in that area of Wichita. Kids World educational child care philosophy is based on the Reggio Emilia approach, which believe that children are filled with natural curiosity and bursting creativity. These attributes form the basis for learning journeys that are accomplished in a warm and collaborative environment and strong relationship with teachers and peers. (Application # 3953)

- City: **Wichita**
- County: **Sedgwick**
(South Central Region)
- Total Project Budget: :
\$2,383,426
- Accelerator Request:
\$1,746,426
- Accelerator Award:
\$1,746,426
- New Slots Added: **60**
- Project Impact on County:
0.5% total child care slots needed

USD 331 Child Care Center

Overview

USD 331 plans to convert unused classroom space in Kingman Elementary School into a full-time child care center, which will be licensed as two (2) separate home programs in a commercial setting based on the advice of KDHE. They plan to offer prioritized and discounted child care services to school district and hospital employees with a focus on lower-income employees such as paraprofessionals, CNAs, and dietary staff. After these prioritized slots are filled, any remaining slots will be available to community members on a first-come, first-serve basis. Based on surveys of current employees they estimate 7-10 children outside of the healthcare and school system will be served. Community partners include Kingman Healthcare Center Foundation, USD 331, Kingman County Economic Development, and the Kingman Recreation Commission. (Application # 4111)

- City: **Kingman**
- County: **Kingman**
(South Central Region)
- Total Project Budget:
\$998,079
- Accelerator Request:
\$720,122
- Accelerator Award:
\$674,027
- New Slots Added: **24**
- Project Impact on County:
10% total child care slots needed

USD 331 Daycare Center

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 Existing Grantee)

USD 331 Daycare Center is in the process of opening two Small Center Pilots, in collaboration with KDHE. Original plans were to renovate two classrooms to have licensing capacity for 24 but shifting to two Small Center Pilots will increase total capacity by an additional 19 child care slots in Kingman, KS. (Application # 4111)

- City: **Kingman**
- County: **Kingman**
(South Central Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$316,016**
- Accelerator Award: **\$ 316,016**
- New Slots Added: **19**

McPherson County Child Care Task Force

Accelerator Overview

The McPherson County Child Care Task force has outlined a four-phase approach to expand capacity and increase quality child care in McPherson County. These include career pathway engagement efforts, mentorship for professionals, shared services, and additional facilities. The increase of practitioners will allow the county, without any additional capital projects, to increase enrollment up to the desired capacity. (Application #3903)

Innovation Communities

The McPherson County Task Force will focus on workforce recruitment and retention by developing a career pathway for local high school and college students interested in early childhood. They will also work collaboratively with partners throughout the county to offer a shared services model for child care professionals to increase business efficiencies and professional development opportunities. Lastly, they will explore public/private partnerships to increase the sustainability of child care locally.

- City: **Moundridge, Lindsborg, Galva, Marquette**
- County: **McPherson**
(South Central Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$1,870,320**
- Accelerator Request: **\$1,145,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$245,000**
- New Slots Added: **152**
- Project Impact on County: **36% total child care slots needed**
- Innovation Communities Award: **\$250,000**
- Innovation Categories: **Workforce Recruitment and Retention and Public/Private Funding Partnerships**

McPherson County Child Care Task Force

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 Existing Grantee)

This funding will support 3 centers in McPherson County, all of which are actively planning renovations, expansions, or the construction of entirely new facilities. Once these projects reach completion, they are projected to significantly enhance the availability of child care slots in McPherson County, with an estimated addition of nearly 200 slots, including increases in the infant and toddler categories. This funding will fund 29 more slots than their original plan.
(Application # 3903)

- City: **Moundridge, Lindsborg, Galva, Marquette**
- County: **McPherson**
(South Central Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$1,116,272**
- Accelerator Award: **\$639,108**
- New Slots Added: **29**

South YMCA Learning Center

Overview

The Wichita YMCA South Branch Early Learning Center renovation and expansion will increase high-quality full day, full year child care services for infants and toddlers. The targeted demographic is low-income families in south Wichita and the surrounding area. Currently, enrollment is comprised of working families, primarily low income with some moderate income. Based on income reported on federal income eligibility documents (CACFP) 84% of the participants at the South Early Learning center qualify for free/reduced lunches, 62% in the "free" category. This project will reconfigure space to provide 13 needed infant and toddler spots. The YMCA is funding most of project from their capital fund.
(Application #4124)

- City: **Wichita**
- County: **Sedgwick**
(South Central Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$2,751,000**
- Accelerator Request: **\$251,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$251,000**
- New Slots Added: **13**
- Project Impact on County: **0.1% total child care slots needed**

Hillsboro Community Child Care Center

Overview

The goal of this child care facility is to provide a safe learning environment to those who need it in Hillsboro. Having additional child care spots open will help parents work, growing the economy and improving the city's tax base. Parents who wish to attend classes at the local college or wish to work have not been able to find open child care positions to be able to do so. The cost of the project has been reduced by identifying a church building that can be adapted. This is a community wide effort that includes strong engagement with the City, Tabor College, Circle D Corp, Hillsboro Community Hospital, USD, and Barkman Honey. (Application # 4155)

- City: **Hillsboro**
- County: **Marion**
(South Central Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$2,368,050**
- Accelerator Request: **\$855,216**
- Accelerator Award: **\$855,216**
- New Slots Added: **83**
- Project Impact on County: **24% total child care slots needed**

Tri County Child Care Coalition

Accelerator Overview

The Tri County Child Care Coalition will create a collaboration of three rural counties (Barber, Harper and Kiowa) to create five new child care facilities adding 198 child care spots by July 2024. The County Commissioners and City Officials in all three counties and all five cities are supportive of the project. Child care centers play an important role in supporting families in the community. By providing a safe, nurturing environment for children, they help to ensure that children are given the best possible start in life. Additionally, these centers can provide families with a variety of services and activities designed to strengthen family relationships and promote healthy development. (Application # 4162)

Innovation Communities

The Tri County Coalition will partner to share child care resources such as a toy bank, professional development opportunities, and floating substitutes across Barber, Harper, and Kiowa counties. In addition to cost savings for participating providers, this approach will also strengthen support and connection among local child care providers.

- City: **Medicine Lodge, Attica, Greensburg, Kiowa, Anthony**
- County: **Barber, Harper, Kiowa**
(South Central Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$2,301,631**
- Accelerator Request: **\$1,725,004**
- Accelerator Award: **\$1,725,004**
- New Slots Added: **198**
- Project Impact on County: **63% total child care slots needed**
- Innovation Communities Award: **\$250,000**
- Innovation Categories: **Rural Child Care**
- Innovation Categories: **Workforce Recruitment and Retention and Public/Private Funding Partnerships**

Mindful Minis

Innovation Communities

Mindful Minis will implement mental health informed approaches into their child care facility. They will incorporate sensory-friendly activities as well as speech and mental health therapies into their services, as well as engagement opportunities for families through parenting groups and modeling sessions. Additionally, Mindful Minis will work to increase broader awareness of mental health needs and informed approaches in the community through collaboration and outreach efforts. (Application # 4108)

- City: **Wichita**
- County: **Sedgwick**
(South Central Region)
- Innovation Communities Award: **\$250,000**
- Innovation Category: **Child Care Plus Models**

Mindful Minis

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 Existing Grantee)

Located in Derby, Mindful Minis is currently in the process of remodeling their current building. Operational funding will allow them to provide full day full year care for 58 children. Previously, Mindful Minis was only awarded an Innovation Grant. (Application # 4108)

- City: **Derby**
- County: **Sedgwick**
(South Central Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$368,962**
- Accelerator Award: **\$368,962**
- New Slots Added: **58**

Early Childhood Impact Center

Innovation Communities

Cowley County will pilot a multi-payer model that includes employer contributions and community donations to a community child care fund. The Share Care fund model is like a public/private funding partnerships established in other states in recent years. As part of engagement efforts with employers to encourage participation in the pilot, the Legacy Foundation and Cowley First will establish a learning cohort of employers interested in implementing child care incentive programs for their employees. (Application # 3958)

- City: **Winfield**
- County: **Cowley**
(South Central Region)
- Innovation Communities Award: **\$225,250**
- Innovation Category: **Public/Private Funding Partnerships**

Alford Kids Academy

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 New Grantee)

Wichita based Alford's Kids Academy is increasing their overall capacity by 60 slots including 7 infant, and 25 toddlers. This program aims to serve their community by providing care during non-traditional hours in a well-equipped setting staffed by quality staff with access to personal and professional development resources. (Application # 4022)

- City: **Wichita**
- County: **Sedgwick**
(South Central Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$370,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$370,000**
- New Slots Added: **52**

Bethany Lutheran Early Childcare Center

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 New Grantee)

Current renovations are underway to add an additional infant classroom. This will provide 9 new infant child care slots to the Wichita area. In addition, with additional staff, licensed capacity could be utilized to add 23 slots for three- to five-year-olds. (Application # 4053)

- City: **Wichita**
- County: **Sedgwick**
(South Central Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$109,054**
- Accelerator Award: **\$109,054**
- New Slots Added: **32**

USD 270 – Little Nests

Accelerator Overview

The Nests project is a multi-phase initiative, designed to address early learning and child care needs in the community, by creating multiple child care group homes, with locations strategically placed in the community. During 2022, the district opened the first child care group home, The Nest #1, on the USD 270 campus. This year, construction is underway for a second child care group home, The Nest #2, located on the Rooks County Health Center (RCH) campus. Funds from the Child Care Capacity grant will be used to support operational costs of the new child care facility, including staffing and "soft" costs to equip the new facility. The facility will have capacity for 20 families, with a maximum of 12 children at any given time. They make a concentrated effort not to undercut pricing of private family child care providers, which is key to the sustainability of the system of care in their community. (Application # 3811)

Innovation Communities

USD270 will establish a Child Care Staff Reserve Pool leveraging local high school and community college students, retired individuals and part-time and full-time workers looking to increase hours and/or training opportunities. In addition to addressing local staffing needs, they hope to establish a model that can be leveraged by other rural communities facing workforce shortages.

- City: **Plainville**
- County: **Rooks** (Northwest Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$436,290**
- Accelerator Request: **\$319,212**
- Accelerator Award: **\$236,120**
- New Slots Added: **12**
- Project Impact on County: **7% total child care slots needed**
- Innovation Communities Award: **\$138,865**
- Innovation Category: **Workforce Recruitment and Retention**

Sheridan County Community Foundation

Overview

The Sheridan County Community Foundation broke ground in the fall of 2022 on a child care duplex facility. The Foundation agreed to sponsor the project and will maintain ownership of the facility. To assist in the upfront costs typically required of new child care providers, the duplex units will be furnished with many of the major start-up supplies, equipment, furniture, etc., and rented at discounted rates to help address the county's child care needs in an immediate fashion. Two private child care providers operating within the duplex will be able to provide care for up to 20 children full-time combined. (Application # 3849)

- City: **Hoxie**
- County: **Sheridan** (Northwest Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$608,680**
- Accelerator Request: **\$200,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$200,000**
- New Slots Added: **24**
- Project Impact on County: **75% total child care slots needed**

USD 294 – Decatur County Child Care Coalition

Overview

Decatur County Child Care Coalition was formed February 2022 following a Strategic Doings presentation. The Building Blocks Child Care facility will operate under the umbrella of USD 294, providing KPERS benefits to employees. The Building Blocks Child Care facility has adopted the mission statement of USD 294, "Our mission. Their journey. Where kids come first!" Their facility will focus on the individual learning journey of each child enrolled in their program. They are in the process building a new facility located near the elementary school, for the convenience of their growing community. (Application # 3933)

- City: **Oberlin**
- County: **Decatur** (Northwest Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$394,715**
- Accelerator Request: **\$73,829**
- Accelerator Award: **\$73,829**
- New Slots Added: **12**
- Project Impact on County: **9% total child care slots needed**

Rawlins County Economic Development

Overview

The Building Blocks Child Care Initiative will increase the number of child care slots by almost 50% in Rawlins County with the addition of 24 slots in two licensed group child care facilities in a renovated dental clinic. The initiative will serve as a model for child care in frontier communities with investments from residents, large employers, community organizations, and philanthropic organizations, to sustain operations. The project plans to be inclusive and provide support for current and future child care providers for perpetuity in Rawlins County, and counties that surround it. (Application # 4109)

- City: **Atwood**
- County: **Rawlins** (Northwest Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$839,741**
- Accelerator Request: **\$671,741**
- Accelerator Award: **\$671,741**
- New Slots Added: **24**
- Project Impact on County: **41% total child care slots needed**

Phillipsburg Child Care Center

Overview

The Phillipsburg Child Care Center opened in 2019. This funding will allow the center to take a step forward, increasing capacity by 30 children to 85 total. The Phillipsburg center is well known across the state for their community-driven approach to the development and execution of their child care plan. They partner with USD 325 to provide internships for high school students. Funding partners include the Dane G. Hansen, Morgan, and Cole Foundations, as well as a new employer to the region, Amberwave. (Application # 4121)

- City: **Phillipsburg**
- County: **Phillips** (Northwest Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$272,242**
- Accelerator Request: **\$200,162**
- Accelerator Award: **\$200,162**
- New Slots Added: **30**
- Project Impact on County: **27% total child care slots needed**

The Grove Child Care Center

Overview

Grow Hays, Inc. is a nonprofit organization aimed at economic development. They will construct a community center in a new housing development called The Grove. The Grove Community Center will be a +14,000 sq. ft. facility housing both the Hays Senior Center and The Grove Child Care Center. The latter will cater to the needs of up to 77 children from infancy to preschool, providing quality child care services in Ellis County. The Grove Child Care Center will offer KDHE-approved field trips to an on-site multi-generational classroom, providing children with unique and shared experiences that foster intergenerational connections. (Application # 3792)

- City: **Hays**
- County: **Ellis** (Northwest Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$5,424,000**
- Accelerator Request: **\$2,000,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$170,000**
- New Slots Added: **77**
- Project Impact on County: **14% total child care slots needed**

Rainbow Academy, LLC

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 New Grantee)

Operational funds for Rainbow Academy, LLC will allow three centers to be fully enrolled. Norton, KS will have an additional 18 licensed child care slots for infants thru age 5. (Application # 3901)

- City: **Norton**
- County: **Norton** (Northwest Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$65,310**
- Accelerator Award: **\$65,310**
- New Slots Added: **18**

Coffeyville Area Child Care Coalition

Overview

ABC is proposing 24-hour care, 6 days a week. This is a need across the state, to provide care for children of adults who work second and third shift. There will be capacity to provide care for 97 children. Their approach to a whole-community effort, including active engagement with family child care and their support of another entity which will move into provide ABA therapy services to children and families impacted by autism and intellectual development disabilities is impressive, as are their efforts to engage with the needs of the growing Spanish-speaking population in their community. (Application # 3821)

- City: **Coffeyville**
- County: **Montgomery** (Southeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$1,176,137**
- Accelerator Request: **\$882,103**
- Accelerator Award: **\$882,103**
- New Slots Added: **291**
- Project Impact on County: **32% total child care slots needed**

Erie Community Child Care

Overview

Erie Community Child Care is working to build a second child care center in their town. The center will have 4 large classrooms as well as a multi-purpose room to respond to their current waitlist, as well as to the needs of employers and the parents who need child care in order to remain in the workforce. They also identify child care as a key part of helping young working adults feel welcome in Erie, ensuring the future prosperity of the community. (Application # 3822)

- City: **Erie**
- County: **Neosho** (Southeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$998,207**
- Accelerator Request: **\$748,207**
- Accelerator Award: **\$ 748,207**
- New Slots Added: **48**
- Project Impact on County: **13% total child care slots needed**

Erie Community Child Care Center

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 Existing Grantee)

Early childhood educators at Erie Community Childcare will see competitive wages and fuller classrooms as a result of Accelerator funding for operations. They look forward to the addition of 4 infant, 4 toddler, and 14 preschool slots while bringing conscious discipline techniques to the children and families they serve. (Application # 3822)

- City: **Erie**
- County: **Neosho** (Southeast Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$216,600**
- Accelerator Award: **\$216,600**
- New Slots Added: **48**

The Growing Place – Humboldt Daycare & Preschool, Inc.

Overview

In the last 17 years, The Growing Place (TGP) has undergone two building expansions and increased its licensing to 124 seats. TGP is shovel ready to expand close to 6000 more sq ft to significantly close that gap and increase another 48 seats; 81% of those specifically in infant to toddler rooms. TGP will hire ten new full-time and five part-time staff that will be offered competitive wages, benefits, and professional development opportunities. They work with USD 258 to provide a CTE pathway for students, and B & W Custom Truck Beds, a major employer in Humboldt, is a strong funder of the project. (Application # 4085)

- City: **Humboldt**
- County: **Allen** (Southeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$1,649,501**
- Accelerator Request: **\$1,237,017**
- Accelerator Award: **\$1,162,017**
- New Slots Added: **48**
- Project Impact on County: **62% total child care slots needed**

West Elk Early Child Center

Overview

The West Elk USD 282 Early Child Center will provide additional early childhood learning opportunities for families who reside and/or work within the West Elk-282 communities. Funding will create 60 KDHE licensed child care slots. Establishing an Early Child Center will be under the supervision of the USD 282 school district in collaboration with the Southeast Kansas Community Action Program (SEK-CAP). This partnership will allow for blended funding to serve children who qualify for Head Start and provide care for the most economically disadvantaged children while infusing much-needed federal funding into the child care center. (Application # 4119)

- City: **Howard**
- County: **Elk** (Southeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$1,576,358**
- Accelerator Request: **\$1,182,268**
- Accelerator Award: **\$1,182,268**
- New Slots Added: **60**
- Project Impact on County: **68% total child care slots needed**

Family Resource Center

Overview

The Family Resource Center Expansion Project renovation will create 58 new 0-5 child care slots in southeast Pittsburg. Families will receive multiple family support services, including Part B and Part C special education; primary, dental, and behavioral health. Children will not be accepted or denied based on income, and children served will reflect the community's population. This is a collaboration between the Ascension Via Christi Hospital, the Family Resource Center (FRC), and others. (Application # 4122)

- City: **Pittsburg**
- County: **Crawford** (Southeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$2,526,388**
- Accelerator Request: **\$1,637,795**
- Accelerator Award: **\$1,637,795**
- New Slots Added: **58**
- Project Impact on County: **6% total child care slots needed**

Grow at Eden, LLC

Overview

Grow at Eden is an early learning child care center licensed for 74 children and is preparing to create and sustain an additional 48 high quality child care seats. The expansion will create space with adequate equipment to offer more community classes. Grow at Eden will co-host or allow use of their space for educational classes through KDHE, KCCTO, K-State Extension Agents, Parents as Teachers, and Greenbush. The classes offered will support Labette County Child Care Network's (LC3) mission to grow child care capacity in Labette Co. and provide access to high-quality, affordable child care. Grow at Eden will be the host site for LC3's educational provider courses. (Application # 4024)

- City: **Parsons**
- County: **Labette**
(Southeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$2,653,966**
- Accelerator Request: **\$1,931,636**
- Accelerator Award: **\$204,982**
- New Slots Added: 48
- Project Impact on County: **15% total child care slots needed**

The Tree House Early Education Foundation

Overview

In February 2020, a project commenced to expand a home-based child care, accommodating 9 children, into a center capable of hosting 52 children alongside a wider range of resources for families. Originally expected to take 4-5 months, the project faced setbacks due to the pandemic, which caused delays, as well as unforeseen building-related challenges coming up repeatedly. The Tree House Early Education Foundation was established by Tamisha Sewell to secure additional funding options and enhance the center's ability to support the community. Much of the work has already been accomplished, and final push is needed to complete the project. The center's services will cater to children from birth to 5, including before and after-school care for school-age children. (Application # 4051)

- City: **Independence**
- County: **Montgomery**
(Southeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$675,203**
- Accelerator Request: **\$387,905**
- Accelerator Award: **\$387,905**
- New Slots Added: **52**
- Project Impact on County: **6% total child care slots needed**

SugarCreek Child Care Center

Overview

SugarCreek, through a community partnership with USD 249 and New Foundations, seeks to add a licensed child care center in the Frontenac Regional Industrial Park. The project will add 200+ seats to a community with significant child care shortages. Their intention is to provide a new facility that can accommodate a variety of work schedules at their facility and other local employers and to make seats available to the community as well. This project will increase workforce participation, improve early childhood development, and school readiness in their community. SugarCreek plans to use these funds along with its own capital to oversee construction and take on the ongoing maintenance of the center. This will allow the licensed provider to operate with no building cost, increasing focus on providing education and care to the children while paying premium wages and keeping costs at or below current enrollment costs in the area. The partnership is designed to ensure sustainability that none of the partners—New Foundations and USD 249—could provide alone. (*Application # 4147*)

Innovation Communities

SugarCreek Child Care Center will partner with USD 249 to increase the local early childhood workforce by leveraging the district's career pathway program. High school students who complete this program will graduate with a CDA, increasing the pool of qualified applicants in the community. Additionally, the Center will offer professional development opportunities to local providers and offer a substitute pool to cover short-term staffing shortages.

- City: **Frontenac**
- County: **Crawford** (*Southeast Region*)
- Total Project Budget: **\$8,863,876**
- Accelerator Request: **\$3,000,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$2,000,000**
- New Slots Added: **206**
- Project Impact on County: **20% total child care slots needed**
- Innovation Communities Award: **\$80,370**
- Innovation Category: **Workforce Recruitment and Retention**

USD 461 Neodesha Early Learning Center

Accelerator Overview

USD 461 Neodesha, has been working since 2017 on a project to construct and sustain a licensed Early Learning Center for children aged birth to five years living within the district's catchment area. Neodesha has roughly 2,000 jobs; nearly 65% of that workforce travels into town each day. Employees often leave as soon as a job is available closer to their home and child care. (Application # 3839)

Innovation Communities

USD 461 Neodesha will work with local high school students interested in early childhood through an internship model, work-study, and/or community-based training. This model is based on a successful existing approach within the district and will now be tailored to early childhood career opportunities. Participating students will gain hands-on experience and training in local child care settings.

- City: **Neodesha**
- County: **Wilson** (Southeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$2,916,053**
- Accelerator Request: **\$2,491,053**
- Accelerator Award: **\$2,491,053**
- New Slots Added: **99**
- Project Impact on County: **25% total child care slots needed**
- Innovation Communities Award: **\$250,000**
- Innovation Category: **Workforce Recruitment and Retention**

USD 461 Neodesha Early Learning Center

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 Existing Grantee)

USD 461 Neodesha Early Learning Center recently broke ground on a center for 99 children birth to five. They were previously awarded funding for construction only so these operational funds will be utilized to prepare the center for opening once construction is complete. (Application # 3839)

- City: **Neodesha**
- County: **Wilson** (Southeast Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$403,450**
- Accelerator Award: **\$199,204**
- New Slots Added: **99**

Emporia Area Chamber Foundation

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 New Grantee)

A transformative effort to change access to childcare is underway in Emporia, Ks with support from the Child Care Capacity Accelerator. Spring 2024 will bring 167 new child care slots to the Emporia area at Little Lyons Childcare. Operations funding will support recruitment of personnel and acquisition of necessary supplies and materials. (Application # 4034)

- City: **Emporia**
- County: **Lyon** (Southeast Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$551,936**
- Accelerator Award: **\$551,936**
- New Slots Added: **136**

Sonshine Childcare

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 New Grantee)

Sonshine Childcare is excited about their two phased approach to bring 106 total slots to the Pittsburg community. This new Accelerator grantee constructed a 10,000 sq. foot facility in response to the overwhelming need for child care in their community. Accelerator funding will support childcare and program staff as they grow the project and reach full capacity. (Application # 3819)

- City: **Pittsburg**
- County: **Crawford** (Southeast Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$385,168**
- Accelerator Award: **\$385,168**
- New Slots Added: **48**

USD 252

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 New Grantee)

Early childhood centers in Olpe and Neosho Rapids will see increased capacity in the infant and toddler age slots and some movement between the centers to better leverage staff and increase capacity. They'll also receive much needed environmental upgrades for outdoor play and indoor classroom spaces. (Application # 3818)

- City: **Olpe, Neosho Rapids**
- County: **Lyon** (Southeast Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$292,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$207,000**
- New Slots Added: **10**

LIFT Minneola

Overview

This project is designed to renovate an existing building into a "turn-key" ready facility for 2 Licensed Child Care Home - Commercial Setting operations able to handle 20 to 24 children while meeting KDHE regulations. Child care has been identified by local community leaders as one of the top two community needs for children, their families & the local economy. By providing the infrastructure for child care, the focus will be on mitigating operational start-up costs in aid of more affordable quality care. The health organization, school and other employers all voiced support in this endeavor as it will greatly assist with recruitment and retention. As the community grows stronger, the health & education of the children will grow with it. (Application # 3850)

- City: **Minneola**
- County: **Clark** (Southwest Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$734,200**
- Accelerator Request: **\$530,300**
- Accelerator Award: **\$530,300**
- New Slots Added: **24**
- Project Impact on County: **24% total child care slots needed**

Grow & Learn Child Care Center

Overview

The Grow & Learn Child Care Center opened in 2022 and will use Accelerator funding to expand their capacity to serve 10 more full-time children. The project will recruit five full time highly qualified professionals and five qualified substitutes and retain these staff via sustainable strategies that decrease the chance of burnout and ensure competitive wages. Located on the USD 467 campus, they have a work study program for high school students, and broad community support with funding coming from community foundations, economic development agencies, the school district, and local industry. (Application # 4104)

- City: **Leoti**
- County: **Wichita** (Southwest Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$470,000**
- Accelerator Request: **\$229,032**
- Accelerator Award: **\$229,032**
- New Slots Added: **10**
- Project Impact on County: **19% total child care slots needed**

Jays Nest Day Care

Overview

Jays Nest Daycare will utilize the KDHE Small Center Pilot model to expand capacity and serve 11 more kids in their small community. The Small Center Pilot aims to bridge the regulatory gap between the license type 'group daycare' which can be licensed for 12 children, and centers. (Application # 4145)

- City: **Ashland**
- County: **Clark** (Southwest Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$500,248**
- Accelerator Request: **\$412,756**
- Accelerator Award: **\$412,756**
- New Slots Added: **11**
- Project Impact on County: **11% total child care slots needed**

Garden Academy Early Learning Center – Finney Co. Child Care Network

Overview

This project will ensure the successful launch of one child care center with an initial capacity of 60 (8 infant and toddler slots) and a possible expanded capacity to 84 (with spots for 16 infant/toddler slots). Finney County has established itself as a leader in child care through their community led approach and unique model; this ongoing commitment speaks to the sustainability of the project. Partners include USD 457, Finney County, Garden City, Western Kansas Community Foundation, KHF, and employers. (Application # 4156)

- City: **Garden City**
- County: **Finney** (Southwest Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$2,003,825**
- Accelerator Request: **\$621,825**
- Accelerator Award: **\$621,825**
- New Slots Added: **60**
- Project Impact on County: **3% total child care slots needed**

The Learning Experience Blue Valley

Overview

The Learning Experience - Blue Valley is a new facility which will be licensed for 159 children from 6 weeks - 6 years old. These are all brand new spots, as the facility is brand new to Overland Park. They intend to be open to the public by summer/fall 2023, with a staff of 30-40 staff members once they are fully staffed. They utilize curriculum developed with the whole child in mind, helping children to advance intellectually, socially, and cognitively. (Application # 3893)

- City: **Overland Park**
- County: **Johnson** (Northeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$1,598,000**
- Accelerator Request: **\$457,500**
- Accelerator Award: **\$457,500**
- New Slots Added: **159**
- Project Impact on County: **1% total child care slots needed**

The Learning Experience - Blue Valley

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 Existing Grantee)

The Learning Experience -Blue Valley is in the process of opening a center with 159 slots. As they have gotten further into their project and been issued a temporary licensing permit, they have capacity for an additional 13 child care slots. (Application # 3893)

- City: **Overland Park**
- County: **Johnson** (Northeast Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$275,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$275,000**
- New Slots Added: **13**

Hilltop Child Development Center, Inc.

Overview

Hilltop Child Development Center will build and operate a new facility, developed in response to requests from the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce, KU, and KU Endowment. Hilltop West will have ten classrooms serving 138 students, and will open its doors 8/2024 with enrollment beginning Spring 2024. Hilltop has implemented an industry-leading wages and benefits package and utilizes a sliding scale fee structure to balance the need to fund their program with the need for affordable child care. 75% of project is funded with a reduced rate loan through KU Endowment. (Application # 3918)

- City: **Lawrence**
- County: **Douglas** (Northeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$8,006,945**
- Accelerator Request: **\$2,500,325**
- Accelerator Award: **\$2,500,325**
- New Slots Added: **138**
- Project Impact on County: **5% total child care slots needed**

The Kids Place – Integrated Behavioral Technologies, Inc.

Overview

Operating since 2012, this project will allow The Kids Place to bring its early child care program and physical plant to full capacity. 12 slots will be added in the infant and toddler rooms. Project activities include the recruitment and training of four lead teachers and minor renovations to the TKP facility to restore full functionality and sustainability, including kitchen equipment, HVAC and generator system. 61% of the children served by The Kids Place represent an underserved population and their facility includes an autism clinic and operates in close relationship with USD 342. (Application # 4048)

- City: **McLouth**
- County: **Jefferson** (Northeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$340,308**
- Accelerator Request: **\$220,442**
- Accelerator Award: **\$220,442**
- New Slots Added: **12**
- Project Impact on County: **4% total child care slots needed**

Hope Chapel Legends

Overview

Hope Chapel Legends will be the second facility operated by Hope Church in Olathe. It also allows the sharing of staff, which will begin with the movement of several key staff from the Olathe facility to the Legends facility. There is substantial need for child care investment in Wyandotte County, and these 92 seats will be directly accessible to a major employment center in the county. (Application # 4110)

- City: **Kansas City (KS)**
- County: **Wyandotte** (Northeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$1,769,085**
- Accelerator Request: **\$944,094**
- Accelerator Award: **\$944,094**
- New Slots Added: **92**
- Project Impact on County: **1% total child care slots needed**

Shawnee County Collaboration - Greater Topeka Partnership

Accelerator Overview

Spearheaded by Greater Topeka Partnership, and taking a community-driven, collaborative approach to adding child care capacity in Topeka/Shawnee County, this project will create 442 new child care slots in the community. A combination of new construction, major renovation of child care buildings previously licensed for child care, expansion of physical space dedicated to child care in existing child care facilities to increase capacity, and workforce strategies to open closed classrooms in currently licensed programs brings a broad array of partners together to address the complex needs of employers, families and early childhood practitioners. (*Application # 4128*)

Innovation Communities

Improve workforce recruitment and retention through a human resource shared services model for child care providers. Proposed activities include piloting a shared centralized intake process for local child care applicants, an awareness initiative to promote center-based employment opportunities and exploration of competitive wage and benefits options throughout the county. Additionally, the collaborative will work to create a network of business "Champions for Child Care" to develop and strengthen public/private funding partnerships.

- City: **Topeka**
- County: **Shawnee**
(Northeast Region)
- Total Project Budget:
\$3,887,076
- Accelerator Request:
\$2,836,613
- Accelerator Award:
\$2,762,113
- New Slots Added: **451**
- Project Impact on County:
8% total child care slots needed
- Innovation Communities Award: **\$249,875**
- Innovation Categories:
Workforce Recruitment and Retention and Public/Private Funding Partnerships

Little Learners Early Childhood Center – Early Childhood Consultants, Inc.

Accelerator Overview

Little Learners Early Childhood Center recognizes that the majority of under-served care is currently for infants and school-aged children, Little Learners are excited to bring a quality program serving infants and school-aged children as well as continuing their program of serving toddlers and preschoolers. They currently have a waiting list at their Olathe locations and with the growth expected in the area, they know the need will continue to increase. They are excited to be able to fill this need in their community with uncompromising quality in child care and early childhood education. This \$700,000 grant will enable this private child care provider to add 41 spots. They employ a substitute lead teacher, which is an exceptional practice and a possible model for other facilities; they also work closely with the DeSoto School District. (Application # 4134)

Innovation Communities

Little Learners Early Childhood Centers will offer a CDA program for its staff as well as local high school seniors and home and center-based professionals. The goal is this approach is to reduce barriers for prospective and current child care professionals access and complete training opportunities. Qualified program participants may be referred for local child care openings to help address staffing shortages.

- City: **Olathe**
- County: **Johnson**
(Northeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$5,338,267**
- Accelerator Request: **\$4,010,879**
- Accelerator Award: **\$700,000**
- New Slots Added: **41**
- Project Impact on County: **0.5% total child care slots needed**
- Innovation Communities Award: **\$72,611**
- Innovation Category: **Workforce Recruitment and Retention**

Little Learners Early Childhood Center – Early Childhood Consultants, Inc.

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 Existing Grantee)

Little Learners is a center currently licensed in the lower level of their building in Olathe, KS. They are currently remodeling the upper level to add more spaces to their license. Once completed, a total of 41 new slots will be available to their community. (Application # 4134)

- City: **Olathe**
- County: **Johnson**
(Northeast Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$761,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$756,000**
- New Slots Added: **41**

Children's Treehouse Learning Center

Overview

Children's Treehouse Learning Center is opening a new facility in Leawood. They have operated their current well-regarded facility in Lenexa since 2015. This grant will cover approximately 15% of the total project cost, reducing the barrier to opening a new facility. Their experience staffing their first location has helped them to build a culture that has low turnover compared to the industry at large. They also have industry-leading benefits including medical, retirement, and longevity bonuses. (*Application # 4154*)

- City: **Leawood**
- County: **Johnson** (*Northeast Region*)
- Total Project Budget: **\$1,872,000**
- Accelerator Request: **\$272,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$ 272,000**
- New Slots Added: **158**
- Project Impact on County: **1% total child care slots needed**

Doniphan Darlings, Inc.

Overview

Doniphan Darlings is a non-profit child care center created following local investment after the closure of over 4 in-home child cares in the county. With the help of Doniphan West USD 111, the old grade school building was converted into a child care center thus making Doniphan Darlings the first and only day care center in Doniphan County. Doniphan Darling's will use funds to make necessary improvements, finishes, and workforce supports to expand capacity. (*Application #4102*)

- City: **Highland**
- County: **Doniphan** (*Northeast Region*)
- Total Project Budget: **\$801,320**
- Accelerator Request: **\$467,520**
- Accelerator Award: **\$467,520**
- New Slots Added: **15**
- Project Impact on County: **5% total child care slots needed**

Accelerator Overview

Create a Child Care Business Accelerator focused on increasing the amount of child care providers and child care workforce which increases the amount of licensable spots community wide. Facility infrastructure focuses on in home or group home providers to start their business who face barriers of physical space requirements or wish to start a business in a collaborative and supportive environment. Upon the business unit's graduation from the Accelerator Facility, a new cohort of business owners can begin, creating an additional 96 of licensable spots annually while retaining the previous cohort's licensable child care spots out in the community. Operational infrastructure housed in the facility extends programming to all providers in Riley County enabling additional training and mentoring, outreach activities, recruitment, active management of a substitute and volunteer pool to also function from this program to limit burnout and help child care businesses remain successful. (Application #3826)

Innovation Communities

The Flint Hills Accelerator Program will offer shared space, training and support for child care providers, including the development of a volunteer and substitute network for local child care programs to access. Training will also be offered to local medical and wellness professionals that interact with families during pre and post-natal care to help build connection points to child care opportunities. The program will also partner with a local technical college and health care provider on career pathways and cost sharing initiatives to support the local workforce.

- City: **Manhattan**
- County: **Riley**
(Northeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$6,200,000**
- Accelerator Request: **\$2,250,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$2,172,954**
- New Slots Added: **100**
- Project Impact on County: **7% total child care slots needed**
- Innovation Communities Award: **\$250,000**
- Innovation Categories: **Child Care Plus Models and Workforce Recruitment and Retention**

Bright Beginnings Child Care Center

Overview

Bright Beginnings Child Care Center will be a newly constructed center in Centralia, which is in the USD 380 School District and Nemaha County. We will provide additional child care seats for 40 children ages 2 weeks to 6 years old. Our center will have 4 rooms including infant, toddler 1, toddler 2, and pre-school. (Application # 3946)

- City: **Centralia**
- County: **Nemaha**
(Northeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$712,692**
- Accelerator Request: **\$385,884**
- Accelerator Award: **\$385,884**
- New Slots Added: **40**
- Project Impact on County: **12% total child care slots needed**

Delightful Village & Delight Ahead

Overview

Delight Ahead recently purchased a facility for expansion. The center they secured had recently closed due to the pandemic and has been under renovation for the past year. In efforts to partner and create sustainability, they are collaborating with the community to establish a long-lasting business that is supported by diverse funding sources. Their Village Initiative was recently established in 2022 in response to the growing need for child care and the expansion of Delight Ahead rebranded into Delightful Learning Center. The new location will increase spaces available to the nearby businesses and government offices from 23 to 108 with the option for employer sponsored child care and extended care for children ages 6 weeks - 12 years of age. Delight Ahead has been engaged with the county-wide Raising WyCo child care systems work and is a Head Start provider. (Application #: 4158)

- City: **Kansas City, KS**
- County: **Wyandotte**
(Northeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$453,996**
- Accelerator Request: **\$113,498**
- Accelerator Award: **\$108,698**
- New Slots Added: **85**
- Project Impact on County: **0.5% total child care slots needed**

Community Children's Center

Accelerator Overview

The Douglas County Early Childhood Community Center includes a child care facility that will be licensed for 69 children with both a day and night shift for a total of up to 138 children cared for each day, 7 days a week. Our focus is serving infants and toddlers to help meet our community's greatest child care need. Drop-in and occasional care are also available to meet the needs of those who are not enrolled in regular care or have a gap or closure with their primary care site. Wraparound services through our Family Resource Center (including navigation and basic needs support, case management, programming and health services) are value-added through co-location to reduce barriers to support and to meet families and children where they are. *(Application # 4081)*

Innovation Communities

Community Children's Center, Inc. and its partners will expand service hours through drop-in, occasional, and scheduled care options for families. This will increase opportunities for families to access care in the evenings and/or on weekends. Additionally, they will pilot a public/private funding partnership model with employers to help employees secure infant/toddler child care.

- City: **Lawrence, KS**
- County: **Douglas** (Northeast Region)
- Total Project Budget: **\$9,596,965**
- Accelerator Request: **\$2,237,808**
- Accelerator Award: **\$628,421**
- New Slots Added: **69**
- Project Impact on County: **2% total child care slots needed**
- Innovation Communities Award: **\$250,000**
- Innovation Categories: **Non-Traditional Service Hours or Targeted Populations and Public/Private Funding Partnerships**

Success by Six

Innovation Communities

Success By 6 Coalition of Douglas County will work to increase culturally responsive supports for child care through intentional outreach and engagement with BIPOC and Spanish speaking families. Douglas and care coordinators will work with families as they identify and navigate access to the early childhood resources that they need. *(Application # 3945)*

- City: **Lawrence**
- County: **Douglas** (Northeast Region)
- Innovation Communities Award: **\$63,103**
- Innovation Categories: **Workforce Recruitment and Retention and Non-Traditional Service Hours or Targeted Populations**

USD 367 and United Way of Miami County

Innovation Communities

USD 367 and United Way of Miami County will implement several workforce strategies to increase recruitment and retention. First, they will establish a mentorship program to pair experienced child care providers with recent hires to provide training and support. They will also conduct several outreach efforts to increase awareness of employment opportunities within child care facilities and develop a comprehensive training program to provide opportunities for professional growth and advancement. Lastly, the partners will conduct community outreach and a needs assessment to better understand and develop solutions for the unique challenges of providing child care in rural communities. Through these outreach programs, they will work to identify potential partnerships to strengthen child care efforts. (Application # 4139)

- City: **Osawatomie**
- County: **Miami** (Northeast Region)
- Innovation Communities Award: **\$250,000**
- Innovation Categories: **Non-Traditional Service Hours or Targeted Populations and Public/Private Funding Partnerships**

Great Adventures LLC

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 New Grantee)

Great Adventures, LLC is constructing a new building that will increase current licensed capacity from 173 to 180. Operational funding will accelerate the opening date to provide additional slots in Shawnee, KS. (Application # 4163)

- City: **Shawnee**
- County: **Johnson** (Northeast Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$1,279,400**
- Accelerator Award: **\$1,279,400**
- New Slots Added: **180**

KidZone Learning Center of Overland Park, Inc.

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 New Grantee)

KidZone Learning Center of Overland Park, Inc. plans to open a new child care center that will be licensed to provide care for 88 children birth thru school age. Operational funding will enable classrooms to be opened at the time of enrollment. (Application # 4140)

- City: **Overland Park**
- County: **Johnson** (Northeast Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$490,528**
- Accelerator Award: **\$490,528**
- New Slots Added: **88**

Open Minds Infant and Toddler Center

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 New Grantee)

Open Minds Child Development Center, LLC is a privately owned center in Johnson County. They are constructing a new center that will have slots for 53 infants and toddlers. They are requesting funding to support start-up of the center. (Application # 3796)

- City: **Olathe**
- County: **Johnson**
(Northeast Region)
- Accelerator Request:
\$897,060
- Accelerator Award:
\$847,060
- New Slots Added: **53**

Outlook Academy

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 New Grantee)

Located within walking distance of the University of Kansas Cancer Center, Outlook Academy is in the final phase of a three-year renovation project. Once completed, 90 licensed child care slots will be available to the Kansas City, KS community. (Application #4133)

- City: **Kansas City**
- County: **Wyandotte**
(Northeast Region)
- Accelerator Request:
\$465,000
- Accelerator Award:
\$409,000
- New Slots Added: **90**

Parkwood Day School Eudora

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 New Grantee + SPARK)

Parkwood Day School LLC operates three inclusion based early childhood centers and plans to open 54 additional B-5 child care slots across these programs operating in Leavenworth, Douglas, and Johnson Counties. (Application #4161)

- City: **Eudora, Leawood, Overland Park**
- County: **Douglas, Johnson, Leavenworth** (NE Region)
- Accelerator Request:
\$983,731
- Accelerator Award:
\$916,482 – CCDF
\$67,250 – SPARK
- New Slots Added: **54**

Parkwood Day School of KCK

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 New Grantee + SPARK)

This project includes two inclusive licensed programs for infants through age 5. Parkwood Day School Garnett and Little Learners of KCK will both be expanding B-5 slots to increase capacity by 55 overall. (Application # 4172)

- City: **Kansas City**
- County: **Wyandotte**
(Northeast Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$696,750**
- Accelerator Award: **\$553,500 – CCDF**
\$143,250 – SPARK
- New Slots Added: **55**

Raising Wildflowers

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 New Grantee)

Raising Wildflowers plans to open two new centers located in Junction City and Manhattan. Once fully operational, total licensed capacity will be 83 child care slots for infants thru 5 years old. (Application # 3886)

- City: **Manhattan**
- County: **Pottawatomie**
(Northeast Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$150,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$150,000**
- New Slots Added: **83**

The Heritage Home

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 New Grantee)

In Alma, KS, construction is underway to renovate and update a prior nursing home facility to be transformed into an intergenerational facility for child care and senior living. The new child care will provide licensed care for 38 children age B-5 in the community with a unique intergenerational component. (Application # 4170)

- City: **Alma**
- County: **Wabaunsee**
(Northeast Region)
- Accelerator Request: **\$270,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$270,000**
- New Slots Added: **38**

USD 491 Eudora

Additional Funding Overview (Round 2 New Grantee)

With the addition of operational funds, USD 491 will be able to extend program hours and provide year around child care in Eudora. Total capacity will provide full day full year child care for 60 children ages three to five. (*Application # 4113*)

- City: **Eudora**
- County: **Douglas**
(*Northeast Region*)
- Accelerator Request: **\$175,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$160,000**
- New Slots Added: **60**



WHAT IS THE CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND?

Through a competitive process, the **Kansas Children's Cabinet & Trust Fund** awarded **10 Capital Projects Fund** grants (CPF) to qualified applicants across Kansas. CPF grants were a one-time opportunity made possible by the US Treasury through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.*

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent public health emergency changed our state's health, economic, and education landscape. Kansans responded to these changes with resilience and ingenuity, developing coordinated, community-driven supports.

Leaders from business, education, and health sectors joined with early childhood champions to meet the multi-layered needs of employees, patients, and families. This funding opportunity is one aspect of our state's response to pandemic-related challenges.

CPF provides **construction-only funding to build multi-purpose community facilities** that jointly and directly:

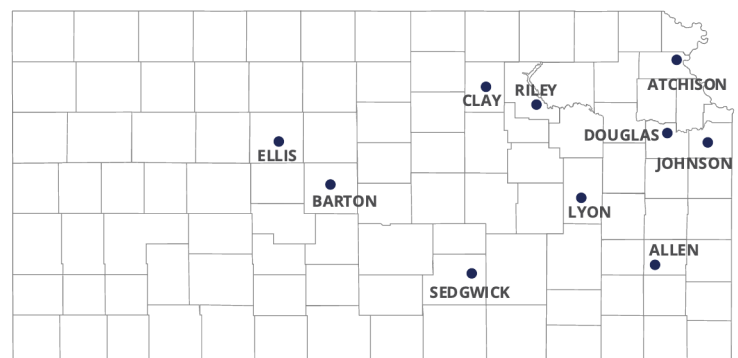
- address a critical need that resulted from or was made apparent or exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- create new **licensed child care slots** providing quality care and education and enabling parents/caregivers (of children birth to age 5) to participate in employment opportunities;
- provide **work and educational activities** to help community members search for and engage in employment and/or develop the skills and knowledge to become employed;
- ensure immediate **broadband access** to community members for at least 5 years; and
- offer **health monitoring services** for community members' physical and/or behavioral health.

\$38 million awarded

Round 1 approved at a special meeting of the Kansas Children's Cabinet on October 19, 2024, awarding three grants totaling \$10,254,009.

Round 2 approved at the February 2, 2024, regular meeting of the Kansas Children's Cabinet, awarding seven additional grants totaling \$27,745,991.

GRANTEE LOCATIONS



*The Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund program was established by section 604 of the Social Security Act, as added by section 9901 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

CPF Grantee Details

Grantee	Award	Slots	Project
Community Children's Center, Inc.	\$4.9 million	69	The Douglas County Early Childhood Community Center will provide drop-in and occasional care with sliding scale tuition along with wraparound services including educational programming, health monitoring, and broadband access.
The Grove Community Center	\$3,597,250	77	The Grove Community Center will bring 77 child care slots to Hays, Kansas, in a multi-generational setting. The Center will facilitate access to work and educational activities offered throughout the community, and exemplifies collaboration across higher education, economic development, local governance, and the medical communities.
Little Lyons of Emporia	\$1,756,759	167	Little Lyons of Emporia will provide 167 new child care slots and a range of community supports including mental health services, vocational workshops, and training activities. Little Lyons is also working with partners to help support basic needs and become a vibrant hub for community connection.
ABCC/Great Bend Economic Development	\$4,382,493	28	The Great Bend Innovation Hub will add 28 new overnight child care slots. Through partnerships with healthcare, education, and others, the hub will provide a community makerspace, workforce services, a curated schedule of classes, a podcast and broadcasting center, commercial kitchen space, health screenings, and preventative care.
Clay County Growth Alliance, Inc., DBA Grow Clay County	\$3,642,000	48	The Clay County Multi-Generational Life Center will provide space for 48 new child care slots and will house a senior space, commercial kitchen, youth lounge, training rooms/co-working spaces, and health monitoring services with an emphasis on mental well-being from Pawnee Mental Health.
Greater Manhattan Community Foundation	\$3.5 million	80	The Flint Hills Community Accelerator will expand child care slots through a business incubator model with eight independent child care businesses housed in one facility. Partnerships with Heartland Works and Manhattan Area Technical College will provide services for job seekers and adult learners, and primary care services will be provided by the Manhattan Free Health Clinic.
KidZone Learning Center	\$1,251,100	88	The KidZone Learning Center will host a new child care space and mental health counseling office. A computer lab and business incubator will make online degree programs available to the community at discounted rates and create workforce and job training opportunities.
St. Benedict's Abbey	\$4,999,999	140	The previous site of the Kansas Juvenile Correctional Facility will be transformed into the First Steps with Abbey Children & Family Complex. Child care services, a workforce training program and career closet, and tutoring and practicum opportunities will be available along with medical, dental, and mental health services on site through the Atchison Community Health Clinic.
Storytime Village, Inc.	\$4,999,999	50	Storytime Village will offer a new child care center and programs to help improve literacy in the community. The Workforce Alliance will provide on-site job fairs, workforce training programs, and registered apprenticeship opportunities. The HealthCore Clinic will provide coordinated care, health screenings, and mobile clinic services.
USD 258	\$4,970,400	24	Cubs Community Care Center will provide child care and an apprenticeship program for early childhood. Career counselors will assist job seekers with job readiness, applications, and interview preparation. The facility will house primary and mental health services and a pharmacy. An expansion of USD 258 Virtual Education Center will provide adult diploma opportunities and satellite college courses.

CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND ACCELERATOR

Summary and Funding Recommendations Approved
October 19, 2023 and February 2, 2024



Overview

CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND PROPOSAL SUMMARY

- **Total Proposals Received: 58**
 - Round 1 - **12** Submissions
 - Round 2 - **46** Submissions
- **Total Funding Requested: \$213.5 million**
 - Round 1 - **\$63.1 million**
 - Round 2 - **\$150.4 million**
- **Total Funding Available: \$38 million**
- **Total Awards Approved:**
 - **Round 1 – 3 Awards**
 - **Round 2 – 7 Awards**
- **Estimated total new child care slots created: 771**

The Capital Projects Fund Accelerator grant is made possible by the US Treasury (Treasury) under the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (CPF) program established by section 604 of the Social Security Act (SSA), as added by section 9901 of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021.

This federal program provides **construction-only** funding to build multi-purpose community facilities designed to jointly and directly enable **ALL** the following federal criteria to be considered for funding:

- The project is designed to address a critical need that resulted from or was made apparent or exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- The project ensures immediate **broadband** access to community members and for a period of no less than 5 years.
- Projects must have explicit design considerations to enable ALL the following activities for a period of no less than 5 years:

- **Work activities** to help community members engage in employment, search for employment, and/or develop the requisite skills and knowledge to become employed (career counseling, workforce training, assistance with job search, etc).
- **Education activities** to acquire knowledge and/or skills, undertaken as part of a person's participation in school, an academic program, extracurricular program, or social-emotional development program for students or youths, internship or professional development program, or in another educational environment.
- **Health monitoring services** for an individual's physical and/or behavioral health.

In addition to the above federal criteria, the Kansas Children's Cabinet received approval from US Treasury to require the following as a condition of funding for successful applicants:

- **Licensed child care slots** to support quality care and education programming for children B-5 that enable parents and caregivers to participate in employment opportunities.

A total of \$38 million was available across two rounds of awards. Round 1 was approved at a special meeting of the Children's Cabinet Board on October 19, 2024, awarding 3 grants totaling \$10,254,009. At the February 2024 board meeting, the Kansas Children's Cabinet approved an additional \$27.7 million for the second round of grants. Seven organizations have been awarded CPF funds to build or improve facilities that offer additional community resources—including child care—for families. The CPF Accelerator grantees have the unique opportunity to dedicate funds to new construction, renovation, or rehabilitation of facilities and other capital improvement for community-driven projects and programs.

The KCCTF and KU-CPPR team provided TA through webinars, direct requests for assistance, and online resources made available at: <https://allforkansaskids.org/cpf-accelerator/>

Timeline

Sept. 5, 2023	RFP Released and Kansas CommonApp portal opens
Oct. 2	Round 1 Application Deadline at 5pm CST
Oct. 3 – Oct. 13	Round 1 Review Process
Oct. 19	Round 1 KCCTF Board Approval

Dec. 18

Round 2 Application Deadline at 5pm CST

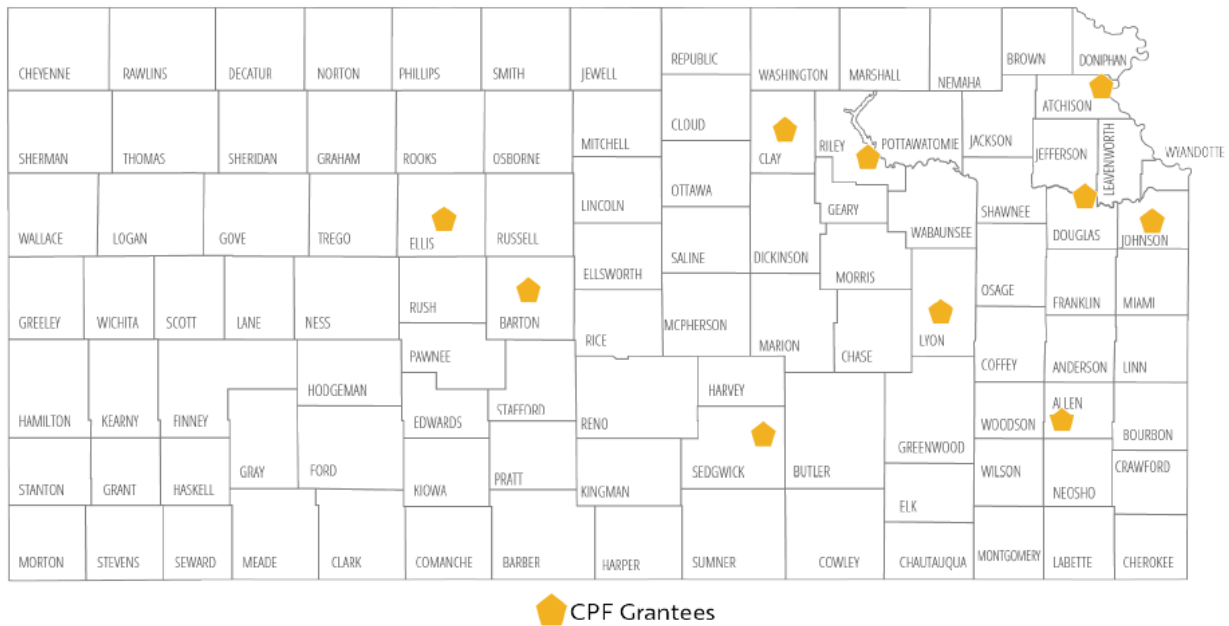
Dec 19 – Jan 12, 2024

Round 2 Review Process

Feb. 2

Round 2 KCCTF Board Approval

Funding Recommendations



Blue = Received CPF funds from the original funding round October 19, 2023

Green = Received CPF funds from the second funding round February 2, 2024

<i>Applicant</i>	<i>Funding Request</i>	<i>Proposed Funding</i>	<i>Slots Added</i>	<i>Proposal Overview</i>
ABCC/Great Bend Economic Development	\$5,057,265	\$4,382,493	28	Community innovation hub centered on empowerment with overnight child care, makerspace, and health screenings.
Clay County Growth Alliance, Inc., DBA Grow Clay County	\$3,642,000	\$3,642,000	48	Multi-generational center offering both child care and senior services with mental health and training resources on-site.

Community Children's Center, Inc.	\$5,329,415	\$4,900,000	69	24/7 child care facility providing drop-in and occasional care with sliding scale tuition
Greater Manhattan Community Foundation	\$5,000,000	\$3,500,000	80	Multi-purpose incubator space for child care providers and local health, higher ed and technical programs, and job training partners.
The Grove Community Center	\$3,597,250	\$3,597,250	77	Community Center housing a senior center and a licensed daycare
KidZone Learning Center	\$1,251,100	\$1,251,100	88	Multi-purpose facility expanding access to child care, education, entrepreneurship resources, and mental health counseling services.
Little Lyons of Emporia	\$1,756,759	\$1,756,759	167	Increase child care and provide community supports such as mental health services, vocational workshops and training activities
St. Benedict's Abbey	\$5,000,000	\$4,999,999	140	Former correctional complex site with career closet, care coordination services, and 24-hour child care.
Storytime Village, Inc.	\$5,000,000	\$4,999,999	50	Literacy-based community center for all ages focused on removing barriers for families to receive quality care and resources.
USD 258	\$4,970,400	\$4,970,400	24	Community Care Center including child care, career counseling, adult learning resources, and a pharmacy.
Total Proposed Funding		\$37,954,009	771	Total Child Care Slots Added

ABCC/Great Bend Economic Development

Overview

(Round 2 Grantee)

Establish the Great Bend Innovation Hub, a center designed to ignite a culture of innovation and empowerment while adding 28 new overnight-shift child care slots in the community by May 2025. Through collaborative partnerships in healthcare, workforce, and educational institutions, the hub will offer a comprehensive range of services to elevate the overall quality of life in the community. This includes a community Makerspace, a workforce service hub, a curated schedule of classes, podcast and broadcasting center, commercial kitchen space available for community, and health screenings and preventative care.

- City: **Great Bend**
- County: **Barton**
- Total Project Budget: **\$5,963,014**
- Accelerator Request: **\$5,057,265**
- Accelerator Award: **\$4,382,493**
- New Slots Added: **28**

Clay County Growth Alliance, Inc., DBA Grow Clay County

Overview

(Round 2 Grantee)

Clay Center Multi-Generational Life Center aims to address a spectrum of community challenges by providing a versatile space catered to the diverse needs of different age groups and demographics. The grand opening in April of 2025 will mean space for new child care slots for up to 48 children as well as several common spaces to foster community and connection with local partners. The Center will house a senior space, commercial kitchen available for the community, youth lounge, training rooms/coworking space for workforce and educational programming, and health monitoring services with an emphasis on mental well-being from Pawnee Mental Health. (Application # 4618)

- City: **Clay Center**
- County: **Clay**
- Total Project Budget: **\$4,660,050**
- Accelerator Request: **\$3,642,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$3,642,000**
- New Slots Added: **48**

Community Children's Center, Inc.

Overview

The Douglas County Early Childhood Community Center is a multi-phased project that will bring 69 day, and 69 overnight childcare spots in addition to community supports through the family resource center. The Center will also provide wraparound services through a co-location model including educational programming, health monitoring services, and broadband access. The Lawrence Community is already benefitting from resources provided at this location, with much more to come by fall of 2024. (Application # 4408)

- City: **Lawrence**
- County: **Douglas**
- Total Project Budget: **\$12,301,020**
- Accelerator Request: **\$5,329,415**
- Accelerator Award: **\$4,900,000**
- New Slots Added: **69**

Greater Manhattan Community Foundation

Overview (Round 2 Grantee)

The Flint Hills Community Accelerator will take a holistic, collaborative, comprehensive approach to meet the needs of the Manhattan community. Partnerships with Heartland Works and Manhattan Area Technical College will provide programs and services for job seekers and adult learners in the community, while primary care services will be provided by the Manhattan Free Health Clinic. Child care will be expanded through a business incubator model with 8 independent child care businesses

- City: **Manhattan**
- County: **Riley**
- Total Project Budget: **\$8,609,100**
- Accelerator Request: **\$5,000,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$3,500,000**
- New Slots Added: **80**

The Grove Community Center

Overview

The Grove Community Center project will bring 77 licensed child care slots to the Hays area in addition to a variety of community resources. By Fall of 2025, the Grove will be a hub for childcare in a multi-generational setting and access to work and education activities offered throughout the community. The Grove Community Center project exemplifies collaboration and incorporates representatives from higher education, economic development, local governance, and the medical community. (Application # 4401)

- City: **Hays**
- County: **Ellis**
- Total Project Budget: **\$6,033,395**
- Accelerator Request: **\$ 3,597,250**
- Accelerator Award: **\$ 3,597,250**
- New Slots Added: **77**

KidZone Learning Center

Overview (Round 2 Grantee)

Multi-purpose facility to include a new licensed child care space (88 slots), a Hy-Flex computer lab, a business incubator program, and a mental health counseling office. This will increase access to child care for lower income families, make online degree programs available to the community at discounted rates, create workforce and job training opportunities, and provide mental health services for the uninsured, under-insured and those who receive Medicaid. (Application # 4440)

- City: **Overland Park**
- County: **Johnson**
- Total Project Budget: **\$2,074,450**
- Accelerator Request: **\$1,251,100**
- Accelerator Award: **\$1,251,100**
- New Slots Added: **88**

Little Lyons of Emporia

Overview

Funding provided through this grant opportunity will position Little Lyons of Emporia to bring 167 new child care slots along with a range of community supports. Using a phased approach, the Little Lyons project will introduce mental health services, vocational workshops and training activities, while partnering with additional resources in the community that support basic needs. Little Lyons will become a vibrant hub for community connection and support as this project progresses. (Application # 4419)

- City: **Emporia**
- County: **Lyon**
- Total Project Budget: **\$2,824,155**
- Accelerator Request: **\$1,756,759**
- Accelerator Award: **\$1,756,759**
- New Slots Added: **167**

St. Benedict's Abbey

Overview (Round 2 Grantee)

Transform the previous site of the Kansas Juvenile Correctional Facility into the beautiful new First Steps with Abbey Children & Family Complex. Child care services will be available no later than June 2025 (140 slots). Community partners will use the space for a career closet and a workforce training program. Local higher education partners will provide a tutoring program and practicum opportunities, while the Atchison Community Health Clinic will expand medical, dental, and mental health services on site. (Application # 4660)

- City: **Atchison**
- County: **Atchison**
- Total Project Budget: **\$8,241,580**
- Accelerator Request: **\$5,000,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$4,999,999**
- New Slots Added: **140**

Storytime Village, Inc.

Overview

(Round 2 Grantee)

Open a Literacy Center in a low-income area of NE Wichita providing daily education activities, workshops, and programs to help improve literacy in the community. A new child care space will enroll 50 children by March 2025. The Workforce Alliance will provide on-site job fairs, workforce training programs, and registered apprenticeship opportunities. The Center will partner with HealthCore Clinic for coordinated care, health screenings, and referrals as well as on-site mobile clinic

- City: **Wichita**
- County: **Sedgwick**
- Total Project Budget: **\$7,010,564**
- Accelerator Request: **\$5,000,000**
- Accelerator Award: **\$4,999,999**
- New Slots Added: **50**

USD 258

Overview

(Round 2 Grantee)

Cubs Community Care Center will include a new 11,400 sq. ft. facility at the current Athletic and Community complex. The facility will include 24 child care slots (focused on infant and toddler care) and an apprenticeship program for early childhood. Onsite career counselors will assist job seekers with job readiness, application support, and interview preparation. The facility will house an integrated system of care for people birth through adulthood, including primary and mental health care as well as a pharmacy. An expansion of USD 258 Virtual Education Center will provide adult diploma opportunities and satellite college courses.

- City: **Humboldt**
- County: **Allen**
- Total Project Budget: **\$7,886,670**
- Accelerator Request: **\$4,970,400**
- Accelerator Award: **\$4,970,400**
- New Slots Added: **24**



Issue Brief

Early Childhood and Literacy

July 2022

Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund

Kim Moore, Chair

Melissa Rooker, Executive Director

Ensuring that all Kansas children can read

This spring the Kansas Legislature passed legislation that included the “Every Child Can Read” Act. The act is designed to promote literacy initiatives in the K-12 public school system and includes the following statement of policy:

“The legislature hereby affirms that third grade marks a pivotal grade level in which students must attain proficiency in reading or risk continued learning losses throughout their academic career. To ensure that all students move toward grade-level proficiency in literacy, especially by the third grade level, the board of education of each school district shall provide opportunities for students to participate in targeted educational interventions to promote proficiency in literacy....”

As we collectively set our sights to achieve grade-level literacy in Kansas, it is critical to understand the opportunities lost by waiting to begin when children arrive in kindergarten. Research consistently demonstrates that there is no better investment in educational outcomes than starting in early childhood.

In this brief, we introduce the science demonstrating that early childhood is the most critical time in brain development, laying the foundation for all future learning. We articulate the goals of the Kansas Children’s Cabinet’s Blueprint for Early Childhood and how the three building blocks of Early Learning, Healthy Development, and Strong Families contribute to a child’s school readiness. We summarize the research on the short-, medium-, and long-term impact of early childhood programming, including cost avoidance studies which consistently demonstrate that high-quality early childhood care and education has a return on investment of 7-13%.

Despite the strong evidence that these programs are highly effective and cost efficient, most children in Kansas do not have access to early childhood programming, and many are living in poverty and often particularly in need of high-quality early intervention. We outline the costs of inaction with regard to connecting young children to the services they need, including costs to employers, impacts on rural communities, and costs to taxpayers. We must seize on this critical moment in child development so all Kansas children are equipped for success in grade school and beyond.

Brain Development in Early Childhood

The early childhood period (birth-5 years) is the most influential for a child's future, providing the foundation for a child to grow, learn, and thrive. With more than a million new brain connections forming each second, a child's brain grows faster in their first three years than any other stage of life. 90% of brain development occurs by the time a child is five years old. Evidenced by findings in neuroscience, the effectiveness of addressing difficulties at later stages in life pale in comparison to early preventive intervention: "A balanced approach to emotional, social, cognitive, and language development will best prepare all children for success in school and later in the workplace and community" (Harvard Center for the Developing Child). These data make the case for purposeful investment in quality and accessible services during early childhood.

When we fail to invest and support the first five years of a child's life, their most critical period

of development, we miss an open window of opportunity. It is difficult and expensive to make up for lost time later. Grade school remediations are proven less effective and much more costly than investing in high quality early childhood care and education programs that help children arrive in kindergarten ready to learn. The differences are startling. When a young child enters kindergarten equipped with pre-reading and math skills along with generally school-appropriate behavior, there is an 82% chance that the child will master basic reading, math and social-emotional skills by age 11. This rate drops to 45% for children who are not school ready (Sawhill et al, 2012). Consequently, an array of catch-up services must be provided during the school years. These delays and expenses could be avoided with engagement in early childhood programs that nurture healthy development and kindergarten readiness.

Blueprint for Early Childhood

The Kansas Children's Cabinet has long recognized that the most effective approach to ensuring thriving children and families starts early and focuses on the needs of the whole child. The Blueprint for Early Childhood (Blueprint) is our state's strategic framework for ensuring that every child thrives. The three building blocks of the Blueprint—early learning, strong families, and healthy development—represent ideal early childhood programming and services for ensuring healthy and thriving children who come to school ready to learn.

Early Learning

Kansas kids are prepared for success in kindergarten and beyond when their families have equitable access to quality care and early learning environments. Higher achievement in early literacy and numeracy in PreK and kindergarten is a stable result across many follow-up studies of quality PreK

in the United States (Lipsey et al 2013, Lipsey et al 2011, Gormley et al 2005). Current research points to a "mixed delivery system" approach with both public and private options offering child care and PreK. The day should include a focus on play-based and developmentally appropriate programming, outdoor play, and less whole group instruction. For 3- to 5-year-olds phonological awareness should be included as a core component of quality early learning (Ramey 2018, Kamenetz 2022, Farran 2016).

For children engaged in two years of high quality PreK funded by the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG), data shows a 34% increase in the percentage of children considered on-track in early literacy skills compared to children engaged in only one year of PreK (Schrepferman and Freund 2019). Data from ECBG classrooms for three years indicated students in high quality PreK programs increased phonological awareness by 17%. Conversely,

classrooms without high quality teacher-child interactions had decreases in the percent of children on track in phonological awareness from fall to spring (Schrepferman 2022). Additional ECBG data demonstrated that children who started PreK with low phonological skills, but had a teacher who provided high quality, warm, nurturing interactions, showed double the growth in early literacy skills. Warm, responsive interactions have been at the core of many high-quality early care and education programs and support the benefit of building safe, stable, and nurturing relationships in the classroom (Stoolmiller and Schrepferman 2019).

Strong Families

Kansas children and families are stronger when their basic needs are met. Policies that help families meet their financial needs reduce stress and conflict within the household, encouraging engaged and responsive parenting. Parents in households experiencing chronic economic challenges are especially vulnerable to high levels of stress (Linver et al 2002) that negatively affects child-parent relationships, and consequently, early childhood learning and development (Meaney 2010, Blair & Raver 2012). Exposure to material hardship is associated with slower brain development in infants (Hanson et al 2013) and atypical brain development and less efficient brain network organization in children (Kim et al 2019). Consequences include reduced capacity for self-regulation and cognitive performance, both of which closely relate to school readiness and performance (McEwen and McEwen

2017). In adulthood, individuals who experienced material hardship in childhood have lower earnings, lower labor market participation, and are less likely to get married (Lesner 2018). High-quality caregiving, social support, and community support can act as protective factors to prevent, moderate, or help overcome the effects of toxic stressors on brain development, cognitive performance, and self-regulation. (McEwen and McEwen 2017).

Healthy Development

Kansas children and families thrive when they have equitable access to comprehensive health and development services. Early intervention for children and families—including home visiting, parent education, and high-quality care and education for 0- to 3-year-olds—favorably impacts brain development, emotional regulation, and the development of social skills (Lind et al 2020, Raby et al 2019, Shaw et al 2009). Frequent child development screening results in early identification, referrals, and early intervention, reducing the need for remediation (Guevara et al 2013, Limbos et al 2011). Targeted, intensive services can ameliorate the impacts of trauma and toxic stress (Zajac et al 2019, Bernanrd et al 2012). For infants and young children, home visiting and parent education programs show positive impacts and development in the areas of communication, social-emotional skills, and brain development (Chazan-Cohen et al 2013, Lind et al 2020).

Impact of early childhood programming

As indicated in the data above, early childhood experiences are predictive of success in grade school, high school, and throughout the life course. High-quality early childhood care and education offered from birth to age 5 can set children, particularly those in low-income families, on the path to higher school achievement, college completion, increased earnings, greater employment, and better health, with a high return on investment over time (Garcia

et al, 2017). One longitudinal study found that early childhood experiences before the age of 4 predicted with 77% accuracy which children would later drop out of high school (Tough 2013).

Longitudinal evaluations of programs funded by the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF) confirm these findings. The Opportunity Project (TOP) of Wichita, an ECBG grantee, works with school districts to track

longitudinal educational outcomes of children who participate in quality, early childhood programming. TOP students consistently demonstrate better educational outcomes than their peers. On state reading assessments, TOP graduates are 29% more likely to exceed reading standards than their control group peers. TOP graduates are 35% less likely than a demographically matched control group to be involved in special education services. On average, TOP graduates have a higher attendance rate, lower repeat discipline referrals, and a higher GPA than a demographically controlled trial (Wichita State University College of Education, 2019). Furthermore, a longitudinal evaluation of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library found that having access to age-appropriate reading materials in the home through program participation increased kindergarten readiness by 28.9%, and increased reading scale scores at the end of 3rd grade by 11% (Arkansas Dept of Education, 2021).

Return on investment

The long-term efficacy of early childhood programming shows a consistent return on investment of 7%-14%. In stock market terms, this is a desired average. Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman and colleagues have repeatedly demonstrated the benefits of investing in early childhood education, particularly for disadvantaged families. Heckman (2012) contends that “The highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible, from birth through age five, in disadvantaged families.” A recent analysis estimates high-quality early childhood program yields an internal rate of return of 13.7% over the life course (Garcia et al, 2020).

Programs funded by the CIF have been found to yield a similar return on investment. A cost analysis of TOP data found that avoidance of special education services alone provided an 11% annual return on investment to the state (Sprague-Jones and Counts, 2016). More recently, an analysis from the Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust found that participating in ECBG and Community-Based Child

Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) services significantly reduced the likelihood of removals into foster care in Kansas by 23%, yielding an 8% ROI on avoidance of foster care alone (Garstka and Sprague-Jones, 2022).

Access to early childhood services in Kansas

Unfortunately, we know from a recent comprehensive needs assessment (Kansas Early Childhood Systems Building Needs Assessment, 2019) that **far too many Kansas kids do not have access to the kind of high-quality early childhood care and education programs and services proven to set them up for success in grade school.** Many children live in low-income households: nearly 20% of Kansas children ages birth to 5 are in families living at or below the federal poverty level (\$25,750 annually for a family of four in 2019), and 23% of Kansas households with infants and toddlers have low, or very low, food security.

Many Kansas families live in a child care desert; 44% of Kansans have little or no access to child care. For single parents of infants and toddlers in Kansas, child care costs 48.7% of their total income. And Kansas ranks 50th in the U.S. for per capita spending on child care assistance at \$19, compared to the national average of \$37 per capita. Finally, 49% of Kansas families with children younger than 6 meet the targeted criteria of at least one home visiting model in the state, but in 2017, only 9% received these services. This high level of need combined with lack of access to quality early childhood programming puts our school districts in the position of having to remediate and provide wrap-around services to overcome deficiencies created by missed opportunities early on that could be avoided through targeted investment and expanded access.

The Cost of Inaction

Inadequate investment in early childhood programming carries significant costs to businesses, taxpayers, and our state's economy.

Cost to employers

America's child care system is in crisis. Child care costs have more than doubled since 1990, well beyond increases in family income during that time (Joughin, 2021). Despite the cost to families, child care centers struggle to stay in business, and child care providers are among the lowest-paid workers in the US (Gould, 2015). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the child care crisis was estimated to cost the United States \$57 billion a year in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue (Bishop-Josef et al 2019). Today, it's estimated that businesses alone experience a total of \$13 billion in economic burden related to child care (Gibbs and Malik 2022). In part, this is because of reduced ability to attract and retain qualified staff. Every year, nearly two million people quit a job, decline a position, or change positions due to child care challenges (Haspel 2019; U.S. Chamber of Commerce 2021). Long-term, lack of investment in early childhood services predictably leads to a shortage of qualified workers. We know this because children who have experienced household economic hardship or adverse childhood experiences and have not received quality early childhood care and education are less likely to complete high school and attend post-secondary education, leading to lower labor force participation (Hardcastle et al 2018; Lesner 2018). In addition to turnover and lack of qualified staff, lack of child care also contributes to lost productivity and absenteeism. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce (2021) estimates that employers lose a combined average of \$2 billion annually from absences and employee turnover due to child care.

Cost to taxpayers

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce reports that "Child care gaps result in massive economic losses for states. Annually, across the states examined, child

care issues result in estimated losses ranging from hundreds of millions to almost \$10 billion." Costs to states include an average annual total of \$528 million in lost tax revenue (U.S. Chamber of Commerce 2021). Significant categories of taxpayer costs include special education, maltreatment and foster care.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

While special education is a vitally necessary service for many children, there is substantial evidence that many children end up in special education as a result of not getting early childhood services. A large proportion of children are placed in special education for difficulties that could have been addressed in preschool (Dubno et al 2013); estimates range from 10% to 49% (Dugger et al 2012). Research also shows that in rural communities, where there are fewer early childhood resources and child care can be difficult to access, children are 60% more likely to be placed in special education than their urban peers (Iruka et al 2019). An analysis of TOP's outcome data found that 33 fewer TOP graduates were placed in K-12 special education services compared to the control group, resulting in the savings of \$4,475,458 in special education costs avoided and associated with a \$6,755,353 increase in lifetime earnings (Sprague-Jones and Counts 2016).

MALTREATMENT AND FOSTER CARE

Child maltreatment comes with significant costs. In Kansas, maltreatment costs an estimated \$97,039 per child, due to expenses for foster care, healthcare, special education, and court services. In contrast, ECBG programs in Kansas, which have been demonstrated to significantly reduce removals of children into foster care, have a per-child cost of \$3,473 (Garstka and Sprague-Jones 2022).

As Kansas ECBG programs demonstrate, early childhood services reduce child maltreatment and children being removed from the home. Children under the age of five (42%) make up the largest age group removed into foster care nationally and

20% of those were under one year old at entry (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, et al., 2021). Nationally, and in Kansas, the leading reason children are removed into foster care is due to neglect (Kansas Department for Children and Families, 2022). Child neglect is more likely in families experiencing stress, particularly economic stress. Kansas DCF has taken steps toward differentiating poverty-related adversity from intentional neglect. Kansas Thriving Families, Safer Children seeks to proactively support children and families by strengthening families and building resiliency rather than separating families. This is part of a national shift transforming child welfare into a child and family well-being system. Expanding supports to strengthen family financial security to meet basic needs, including access to child care, nutrition programs like WIC and SNAP, and affordable housing could dramatically reduce the number of children who are removed from their homes into foster care.

INCARCERATION

Just as economic hardship is a prominent contributor to families becoming involved with the child welfare system and children entering foster care, foster care maintains a stark correlation with a child becoming involved in the criminal system. This reality has been colloquially called the “foster care to prison pipeline.” It is estimated that over 50% of youth in foster care experience the juvenile justice system through an arrest, conviction, or overnight stay in a correctional facility before they age out of care, and this number increases significantly for youth that have experienced multiple placements (Palcheck 2021).

Impact on rural communities

There are fewer child care slots than children under 5 in every Kansas county. The economic impact of this child care gap in rural communities is estimated to be from \$41,168 to \$62,693 per missing child care slot (Bipartisan Policy Center 2021). While 57% of counties have at least twice as many young children as child

care slots, in 20% of counties, that ratio is three to one or higher (KU Institute for Policy & Social Research).

The lack of child care contributes to out-migration from rural communities. Kansas’s population is becoming more concentrated in urban areas, while 80 mostly-rural counties have declined in population since 2010 (Steiner, 2021). Rural communities have difficulty attracting and retaining both employers and a skilled workforce. A recent article in the Great Bend Tribune (“Hoisington, Barton County seek workers,” May 11, 2022) identified lack of child care as a major barrier to economic growth in the community. According to Barton County Commission Chairman Shawn Hutchinson, who also serves on the Great Bend Economic Development Board, “Housing and child care are top needs, but the number one need to grow our economy in Barton County is workers. Housing and child care are ways that we can get more workers.” Similarly, a recent study of more than 460 rural-dwelling Kansans ages 21-39 identified early education and child care as a top need (Kansas Power Up & Go, 2022).

The lack of early childhood investment also contributes to a declining birth rate. The overall U.S. trend is a substantial decline in the birth rate, and Kansas ranks amongst the top 10 states with the largest decline (Kaberline 2021). The rate in 2020 was “the lowest birth rate for Kansas residents since the state created a centralized Vital Records system in 1911” (Oakely et al, 2020). While not unique to rural communities, the falling birth rate may be particularly harmful to them, exacerbating trends of out-migration, creating an aging population with a reduced work force to support it, and cratering local schools, which are often the center of rural communities. There is substantial survey and demographic evidence that women are having fewer children than they intend or would like to have, in part due to the expense and lack of support for childrearing (Stone, 2019).

Conclusion

Investing in what works

Early childhood is the most important time of our lives for brain development and lays the foundation for all future learning. This presents an enormous opportunity to give all kids the start they need to succeed in school, their communities, and eventually their careers. It also presents a dangerous liability. The costs of not investing in young children, including low educational attainment, compromised physical and mental health, and low labor market participation, are significant and alarming.

The Kansas Children's Cabinet's Blueprint for Early Childhood is built on decades of science identifying the conditions under which children thrive. It focuses on the needs of the whole child organized by three critical building blocks: early learning, healthy development, and strong families. Investments guided by the Blueprint have a demonstrated track record of success, including improved literacy, lower placement in special education, and avoidance of foster care.

The only problem is that there's not nearly enough investment. Most Kansas kids do not have access to high quality early childhood programming, and many are facing economic insecurity and food scarcity – in other words, they need even more help to ensure lifelong success. If we continue this path of underinvestment in children at the most critical time in their lives, we can expect to pay for it later, losing billions of dollars in forgone earnings, productivity, and revenue; sinking billions into placing children in the foster care system; and losing out on the untold potential of thousands of children who were never given a chance to thrive.

No one would knowingly choose this future for our kids.

What we must choose now for Kansas kids are the right-sized investments in programs proven to work:

- Early care and education that develops the whole child, while providing parents reliable care so they can work
- Home visiting and parent education programs that help families learn how to support and nurture their children and also connect families to needed resources
- Programs that address families' basic needs, including housing and nutrition

Kansas can become the best place in the country to raise a family, while attracting and retaining young people, bringing in new employment and investment, and producing the next generation of innovators, entrepreneurs, scientists, and artists. In the process, we can reduce the money we spend on foster care and incarceration, revitalize our rural communities, and avoid needless misery and loss.

We know what it takes to get there, and the fact is, it's not even that expensive. We just need to be willing to commit to investing in the opportunities before us.

Actions to promote childhood literacy

Governor and Kansas Legislature

The Governor and Kansas Legislature can take several actions to improve access to early childhood care and education and ensure that all Kansas children can read:

1. Match the investment in the CIF Initiatives from the State General Fund to double the investment in the Early Childhood Care and Education System.
- Kansas is home to 188,852 children ages birth to 5 (United States Census Bureau, 2020). The current CIF funding capacity of \$52,474,070 equates to \$278 per child. Matching the CIF investment using state general funds would increase the investment to \$107,571,842 or \$556 per child.
2. Meet the statutory requirement to fund 92% of excess costs for special education, leaving more of school districts' general operating budget available to support early childhood initiatives.
3. Support initiatives and policies that contribute to economic security for families. Research clearly shows that children thrive when their basic needs are met, and that parents and caregivers are better able to support children when *their own* basic needs are met.
- Adopt policies that maximize Medicaid by expanding covered/billable services for children and families, the types of providers who qualify for reimbursement, and the settings where services can be provided.
- Reduce eligibility barriers and administrative burdens so that more Kansas families can access concrete economic supports like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food assistance, and child care assistance.

- Analyze the impact of current and future policies on funding, services, and programs specifically for underserved populations to help families improve access to basic supports.

Local school districts

Local school districts can take action to improve early learning and the transition into kindergarten:

4. Participate in Kansans Can Star Recognition Program.
5. Utilize the Kansas Early Childhood Advisory Council's Kindergarten Transitions Toolkit to support intentional, active community planning for transitions to kindergarten.
6. Prioritize quality preschool opportunities for children, as well as home visiting, family engagement, and educational programming for families, either through in-house programs or in partnership with local private providers.

Families

Families can promote early literacy by:

7. Signing their eligible children (any child from birth to their 5th birthday) up for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.
8. Using 1-800-CHILDREN as a direct resource when they have questions or need specific services in their area.
9. Tracking their little one's development by getting familiar with the Center for Disease Control's Learn the Signs, Act Early milestones on their website or mobile app.

Employers

Kansas employers should:

10. Adopt family friendly workplace policies to help support families with young children. These strategies are proven to increase recruitment, retention and productivity for employers as an added benefit. Examples include, but are not limited to:

Actions to promote childhood literacy (cont'd)

- Flexible work schedules and/or hybrid or remote work
 - Paid parental leave and sick leave
 - Comprehensive employee wellness programs
 - Continued breastfeeding and lactation support
 - Infants at work programs, on-site or subsidized child care, and dependent care flexible spending accounts
11. Take advantage of the Child Day Care Business Tax Credit, which has been expanded to make eligible all Kansas businesses that provide child care for employees or help employees pay for child care.

Supporting Dual Language Learners

To support dual language learners, early childhood care and education providers should:

12. Help connect families to resources available in their home language. Examples include:
- 1-800-CHILDREN online resources available in over 200 different languages, and personnel available to provide support in Spanish and multiple other languages for callers.
 - Dolly Parton's Imagination Library publishes two Spanish/English bilingual titles per age group each year and the web-based resources can be translated into Spanish.
 - Kindergarten in Kansas handbooks for families available in six languages on the Kansas State Department of Education website.

13. Make a point of introducing and explaining vocabulary during activities and while reading out loud.
14. Provide ongoing commentary on activities taking place to expose children to language within context.
15. Encourage families to read, sing, and play games with their children in their home language: early literacy skills transfer to second language and provide a strong foundation for learning in English.
16. Make efforts to provide bilingual or multilingual education as appropriate to the community served:
- Incorporate songs, stories, and other materials in children's home language(s) into the care environment.
 - Hire staff who reflect children's language and culture.
 - Invite parents and community members to contribute to children's education through materials and activities suggestions and visits to the care environment.

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