



Child Care Coalition of Dodge City

A grant of \$1.25 million was awarded to The Child Care Coalition of Dodge City by the State of Kansas, championed by Kansas Rep. Jason Goetz, to renovate and repurpose a 7,500 square foot facility. State funding included \$250,000 from the Children's Initiatives Fund and \$1 million from the State General Fund, to support construction of the Full Circle Childcare Center. The project is backed by more than \$6 million in funding, including a \$5 million investment from Cargill and additional supports from the Patterson Family Foundation and Hilmar Cheese. MR Builder donated the building and site.

The child care center will house four separate rooms, allowing flexible assignment as infant, toddler, or preschool rooms based on community needs at the time of opening, which is slated for July 2027. The new facility represents the culmination of years of planning in the community, which began in 2019 with formation of a child care coalition. The coalition, which officially became a nonprofit in 2024, formed because local employers were experiencing workforce shortages linked to insufficient child care. The project builds additional child care capacity in Dodge City and offers care during non-traditional hours to accommodate shift work at major employers in the area, with the potential to operate 24/7. The initial plan is to license the center for 68 children, with the possibility of increasing to serve over 100 children as coverage for multiple shifts is added.

"Our plan is to have on infant room, one toddler room, and two preschool rooms, but the way it is designed it can be changed. We will start taking applications in early 2027 and, based on the need, we'll decide on rooms at that time. We should be licensed for 68 kids."

—Molly Lightner, Dodge City/Ford County
Development Corporation

Dodge City credited the generous funding and grant structure for driving the coalition to make necessary decisions to move the project forward quickly. Coalition representatives also emphasized that involving a broad array of partners in the effort, including child care licensing specialists, local child care providers, and employers, has been critical to community support and overall progress.



Groundbreaking ceremony, Dodge City, Kansas

About the Kansas Children's Cabinet

The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund (Kansas Children's Cabinet) was established by statute in 1999 to advise the governor and legislature on the use of funds for children's programs, including monies from the Master Tobacco Settlement. Kansas Children's Cabinet activities are guided by the Blueprint for Early Childhood.

On July 1, 2026, the Kansas Children's Cabinet became part of the new Kansas Office of Early Childhood (KOEK), which brings together nearly 20 state early childhood services and programs previously housed across multiple state agencies. KOEK's mission is to strengthen the Kansas early childhood system by connecting programs and services that help children succeed, families thrive, and communities prosper.

Kansas has undertaken ambitious efforts to expand access to child care, but significant gaps remain. Much of the state has experienced child care shortages for decades, a challenge made more complex by its rural geography. As of January 2026, licensed child care supply met only 45% of potential demand statewide. Access to infant and toddler care remains an especially significant challenge. The result is a child care landscape in which families in many communities continue to face limited options, while providers and communities work to build and sustain the capacity needed to meet local demand.

Ensuring families have access to child care is a core focus of the state's All In For Kansas Kids Strategic Plan for early childhood. Affordable, high-quality child care supports a strong workforce, effective education, and healthy development for children and families in Kansas. This grant to the Child Care Coalition of Dodge City represents a coordinated effort to take direct action and generate novel solutions. It also complements similar efforts by the Kansas Children's Cabinet, including the Child Care Capacity Accelerator and Capital Projects Fund. Together, these efforts are catalyzing partnerships among local early childhood providers, employers, economic development leaders, and other community partners to accelerate local capacity and expand child care options where families need them most.