

# **Blueprint for Early Childhood articulates strategic framework for improving lives of young Kansas children and their families**

*Kansas Children's Cabinet & Trust Fund partners  
with KU Center for Public Partnerships & Research  
to develop comprehensive, measurable plan*

TOPEKA, Kan. — Building better support systems that help improve the lives of Kansas children and families is the primary focus of the [Kansas Children's Cabinet & Trust Fund](#). Now, the Cabinet is implementing a comprehensive plan for expanding effective early-childhood programs and services across the state.

The [Blueprint for Early Childhood](#) recognizes the whole child, with a focus on three building blocks—Healthy Development, Strong Families and Early Learning—and provides a strategic framework to inform investments and maximize positive outcomes for young children and their families.

“The Blueprint is essential to our state’s success in early-childhood services and systems,” said Cabinet Executive Director Janice Smith. “Creative community collaboration between multiple partners working toward a shared vision of high-quality, accessible, and affordable programs for young children and families is needed to achieve our goals. I am confident that we can do this and believe the Blueprint will give us the tools. Everything is in place to work together toward our common goals.”

Because 90 percent of a child’s brain architecture is established before the age of five, Smith said, early intervention is key to improving outcomes for young Kansas children. By supporting quality early-childhood education, care and health services that are critical to strong child development, the Cabinet aims to reduce the need for more costly remediation in the education and criminal-justice systems of the future.

Built on past systems’ work and developed in partnership with the [Center for Public Partnerships & Research](#) (CPPR) at the University of Kansas, the Blueprint focuses on nurturing a culture of public-private partnerships that will help the Cabinet align its investment portfolio and monitor progress toward goals.

“The Blueprint articulates the Cabinet’s broad vision of success,” Smith said. “While the path to achieve success may vary, the Blueprint is intended to serve as a guide for program design, partnership development, implementation and tracking. We strongly believe that the most powerful change comes from the community level and develops from the alignment of stakeholders working together in a coordinated way.”

The Cabinet is directed by state statute to fund and evaluate key children’s programs across the state. Through the Children’s Initiatives Fund (CIF) the Cabinet provides approximately \$56 million annually to CIF programs and Early Childhood Block Grantees. The Cabinet also administers the Community-Based Grants for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (CBCAP) program.

“Helping the Cabinet work toward achieving their strategic vision of an investment portfolio that leads to better results for children and families is both exciting and rewarding,” said CPPR Director Jackie Counts. “We know that through this collective work and forward-thinking we are helping the Cabinet build a strong foundation for children and families in Kansas.”

A critical element of the Blueprint is its system of shared measurement. Cabinet-funded Early Childhood Block Grantees and Cabinet-administered Community Based Child Abuse Prevention grantees are part of a newly developed shared-measurement system known as the Common Measures initiative, selected and

led by Wichita State University. Grantees are currently moving through pilot and field-test phases of the initiative and are scheduled to go live in early 2015. To track, evaluate and report their Common Measures, grantees will use DAISEY, an integrated data system created and managed by CPPR.

“By using the Common Measures we are able to move our staff from being great to being great, informed, and focused,” said Ann Elliot, executive director of the Family Resource Center in Pittsburg. “It has enabled our teachers to use these results as a way of enhancing and focusing their practice to support each child's development and to partner with families on their child's development and education.”

Smith said Common Measures and DAISEY help move the Cabinet forward in its aim to measure and demonstrate how investments at the local level positively impact early learners and their families' lives at the state level.

“The Cabinet partners with a diversity of non-profit organizations, school districts, state agencies, faith-based organizations and private sector businesses throughout the state,” Smith said. “These partnerships form the foundation for building healthier, stronger Kansas children and families.”

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