

STRENGTHENING early childhood in KANSAS

"We are ALL Early Childhood Stakeholders"
Governor Laura Kelly

In 2019, Kansas has the opportunity through new federal grant funding to shape our state's future direction for early childhood by developing a comprehensive needs assessment and strategic plan. This collaborative effort invited the voices of all Kansans and resulted in an impressive cross-section of nearly 6,000 contributors. As part of this effort, individuals across the state joined to share their vision for the early childhood care and education (ECCE) system they want to see in their communities.

EXISTING NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

One component of the needs assessment process was a review of existing needs assessments and reports from the broader early childhood care and education system in Kansas. This review included both state level and local level documents across sectors. In addition to the list identified in the initial planning, stakeholders and partners from across the state were invited to share additional needs assessments and reports for review. These documents and reports were reviewed using a rubric designed for this process; this rubric provided a framework for evaluating and organizing information across three categories: experiences of children and families; service and programs within the early childhood care and education system; and early childhood care and education infrastructure.

13

local reports

- Child Care Supply Demand Report 2018
- Child Care Market Analysis Final Report 2017
- Kansas Head Start Collaboration Office Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan 2018
- SNAP ED Needs Assessment
- Workforce Professional Development Data 2018
- Head Start Community Assessment
- MIECHV Needs Assessment 2010
- MCH Kansas Maternal and Child Health Needs Assessment 2020
- Child Care Deserts Report, KS 2019
- KS Child Care Fact Sheet 2018
- Early Childhood Workforce Index, KS 2018
- KS PAT Annual Report 2017-18

32

statewide reports

- DCF Public Assistance reports and Child Protective Services reports 2018-2019
- Early Childhood Homelessness 2017
- State of Babies Yearbook, KS 2019
- Head Start Smiles for Life report 2019
- County Health Rankings 2018
- Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition Reports
- KS Head Start Collab Office reports on homelessness and collaborations
- US Census Bureau demographic reports
- Kansas Kids Count reports 2018
- Kansas Medicaid and Uninsured reports
- Mental Health Task Force Report to KS Legislature
- Childcare Workforce report 2018
- Home Visiting Yearbook 2018

45

total reports

- Migrant Education Program Needs Assessment 2016
- Early Learning Facilities Policy Framework
- Head Start PIR data
- KCSL Healthy Families Annual Report 2018
- Early Childhood Block Grant Local Grantee Needs Assessments
- CBCAP local grantee Needs Assessments
- Head Start/Early Head Start Grantee Needs Assessments
- Cowley County Community College Needs Assessment
- KC Area Childcare Landscape Study
- MARC Status of Children 2019
- Impact KCK Assessment
- Liberal Area Coalition for Families meeting notes

"Moms are often returning to work two weeks after delivery, both because of limited leave time and also to pay the bills."

– Parent

What we heard from Kansans

UNIVERSAL FINDINGS

Families have basic needs that are not being met, and that is driving the way they do or do not interact with the early childhood system. These experiences differ greatly across the state.

OTHER THEMES THAT EMERGED

- ★ Accessibility and Availability**
Availability and accessibility to early childhood care and education services vary greatly across the state. Greater access to infant care and non-traditional childcare is needed. The duration and intensity of services do not always match the level of needs but rather are based on other characteristics (i.e. geographical location).
- ★ Navigation**
Entry points into services vary by community presenting navigational challenges for Kansas families. Continuous engagement in services requires a great amount of problem solving. Components of the mixed delivery system focus on increasing referrals and entrance points, via a broad range of cross-sector partnerships.
- ★ Collaboration and Integration**
The nature of gathering parental/client input is inconsistent. An effective feedback system would have clear and standardized definitions of needs and design of services. Collaboration between agencies and local providers would eliminate inefficiencies. This type of collaboration would also help families access services more quickly and with fewer transitions.
- ★ Workforce**
The needs of the early childhood workforce, at both leadership and direct service levels, include preparation, compensation/financial relief, ongoing training and support, recruitment, and retention.
- ★ Opportunities**

 - Expand approaches and opportunities to connect young children and families to high quality services across the mixed delivery system.
 - Intentionally implement, sustain, and measure quality improvement efforts and strategies.
 - Define a sustainable approach to the availability and ongoing development of the early care and education workforce
 - Strategically align and sustain cross-sector partnerships, intersections, and coordinations at the local and state levels to further the availability and impact of high quality services across the mixed delivery system and to minimize disruptions.
 - Maximize the opportunities for strategic and innovative public/private partnerships and funding strategies that support an efficient and robust infrastructure.

“Our greatest need is linkages and alignment of all who impact the lives of young children and families.” - Community Leader

BRIGHT SPOTS

The groundwork and enthusiasm is in place for an efficient and robust mixed delivery system infrastructure. Across various programs and services, many programs are acting in partnership or collaboration with others to increase awareness of service availability, identify and recruit eligible children and families, and increase engagement.

“You have to be in crisis to get connected.” - Parent