



Early Childhood Systems Building Needs Assessment Central Messages & Key Findings

CENTRAL MESSAGES:

1. The experiences of families with young children in Kansas are shaped by where they live, both across the regions of the state and within their communities.
2. Young children are growing up in families where basic needs are not being met.

KEY FINDINGS	
<p>Accessibility</p> 	<p>Families with young children experience inequitable access to high-quality programs and services across the broader early childhood system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of reasons: geography, isolation, awareness, eligibility, fear/stigma, and affordability. • Examples: Proximity to the location of services; desired services not universally available; lack of awareness until a family emergency or crises necessitates access.
<p>Availability</p> 	<p>Families with young children experience a gap between the services that are available and their actual needs, especially among underserved populations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaps exist around basic and parenting skills, childcare, crises services, and health services. • Example: Childcare for infants, non-traditional hours, and children with special needs. • Example: Accessible, affordable health, mental health, and dental care.
<p>Navigation</p> 	<p>Families must adopt a “connect the dots” approach to navigate services across sectors; disruptors are frequent and common.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous engagement in services requires a great amount of problem solving. • Examples of disruptors: engagement, geography, availability, varied eligibility, language/immigration barriers, age, moves, and family income. • Example: Transitions gaps occur at multiple levels within the early childhood care and education system, between sectors, and into kindergarten.
<p>Collaboration and Integration</p> 	<p>Early childhood providers and stakeholders share a desire for collaboration and cooperation but these often remain disconnected and uncoordinated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts are single purpose driven rather than comprehensive in nature. • Example: Need for greater organized coordination to improve accessibility. • Example: Importance of collaboration across the mixed delivery system, including engaging business partners & civic leaders.

<p>Workforce</p> 	<p>Early childhood workforce needs at leadership and direct service levels include preparation, compensation/financial relief, ongoing training and support, recruitment, and retention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More support needed to fully recognize a coordinated and sustainable approach. • Examples: Diminishing number in the EC workforce; lack of credentials and opportunities to gain credentials; lack of respect and value; professional development primarily driven by regulations and availability.
<p>Facilities</p> 	<p>Needs exist related to the physical conditions and environments of early childhood facilities across the state.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts around facilities largely driven by regulation and current areas of focus in the field. • Examples: Limited resources for capital projects; little data exists related to construction and renovation needs; additional learning materials needed as part of quality improvement.
<p>Systems Alignment</p> 	<p>Greater systems alignment is needed in order to fully realize an efficient and robust early childhood care and education infrastructure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary areas for future systems alignment include regulation and policy, data sharing, funding and resources, and shared governance/system integration. • Examples: Need for regulation/funding flexibility; regulations have unintended consequences that affect accessibility and availability; desire for family-friendly policies.
<p>Bright Spots</p> 	<p>Efficient, innovative, responsive efforts are occurring amongst early care and education system partners in communities throughout the state.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bright spots exist in all regions that speak to the resilience of families and communities. • Examples: Community level solutions and approaches; successful models of public-private partnerships.

Share your thoughts about what individuals, communities and the State of Kansas can do in response to these findings at <https://kschildrenscabinet.org/share>

Funds for this project are provided through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five 90TP0016-01-00 was awarded to the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). The Kansas Children’s Cabinet and Trust Fund, the Kansas Department for Children and Families, and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment are leading this work with KSDE. This information or content and conclusions should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HHS, ACF, or the U.S. Government. Any food or refreshments are not paid for by federal funds.

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