



B L U E P R I N T
F O R
E A R L Y
C H I L D H O O D

Healthy Development

Strong Families

Early Learning



**Building a solid foundation for
Kansas children and families**

WHAT IS THE BLUEPRINT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD?

**The Blueprint for
Early Childhood is
our state's strategic
framework for
ensuring that
*every child thrives.***

Young children, birth to 5, and their families rely on a solid foundation in the Kansas early care and education system. The Blueprint guides decision making system-wide and locally so that every community, every provider, every stakeholder, and every parent can rely on a network of support that promotes:

**Healthy
Development**

**Strong
Families**

**Early
Learning**

These three “building blocks” are the foundation for collaboration across sectors, with multiple champions working toward **high quality, accessible, and affordable programs and services** for young children and families across Kansas.

While the paths to success may vary, our vision of *every child thriving* and this **Blueprint for Early Childhood** are intended to guide innovative program design, partnership development, sharing of best practices, and tracking toward long-term outcomes for children and families.

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.

IMPACT

The prosperity of our state depends on the wellbeing of our youngest Kansans. Investing in early childhood programs yields significant returns through improved health, education, and economic outcomes. The Blueprint provides the common language, shared vision, and guidance necessary for cross-sector collaboration in the delivery of high-quality programs and services, and it provides a common frame for determining impact on children and families.

IMPLEMENTATION

The **Blueprint** and the **Strategic Plan for the Kansas Early Childhood Care and Education System** align the activities of agencies and providers in our state's mixed-delivery system around common goals. The Blueprint also aims to maximize parental choice and awareness of early care and education options, and guides the Cabinet's investment portfolio.

Vision in Action

GOAL 1: STATE-LEVEL COORDINATION

The early childhood care and education system is structured and aligned for maximum impact.

GOAL 2: COMMUNITY-LEVEL COORDINATION

Communities are empowered and equipped to create the best environments to raise a child.

GOAL 3: FAMILY KNOWLEDGE & CHOICE

Families have what they need to make informed decisions and can get services where they live and work.

GOAL 4: PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT

Kansas is a champion of public-private collaboration and creates opportunities to invest in the future of Kansas kids and families

GOAL 5: CAPACITY & ACCESS

Kansas families have their basic needs met and have equitable access to quality early childhood care and education services.

GOAL 6: WORKFORCE

Kansas leads the way in developing, supporting, and valuing early childhood professionals.

GOAL 7: QUALITY AND ENVIRONMENTS

Kansas care and education programs and environments are high quality, safe, and nurturing.

BUILDING BLOCKS

for a solid foundation



Healthy Development

PRIMARY CARE
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
EARLY IDENTIFICATION

Kansas kids and families thrive when they have equitable access to comprehensive health and developmental services.

Kansas will...

- Promote early prenatal care and education, insurance coverage, and ongoing support for pregnant women
- Promote comprehensive care and insurance coverage for children and families
- Ensure equitable access to prevention and intervention services in early childhood for optimal health outcomes
- Screen universally for healthy development
- Overcome barriers and stigma around mental health care and services
- Promote inclusion of children with disabilities into natural environments
- Address workforce shortages/gaps in health and behavioral care services



Strong Families

PARENT SUPPORT
SAFE, STABLE, NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Kansas kids 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 and coordination 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 kids are prepared for success in kindergarten and beyond when their families have equitable access to quality care and early learning environments.

Kansas will...

- Ensure high-quality care to meet basic needs of all children by promoting adequate funding for core services and quality enhancements
- Promote a range of choices in early learning experiences (community-based, school-based, home-based, faith-based) and support economic development of businesses to maximize high-quality options
- Promote effective transitions over the life course, including transitions into kindergarten and across sectors, as children and families seek services and support
- Support inclusive and culturally sensitive training for early childhood professionals based on established core competencies
- Support the use of early learning standards to increase consistency and quality of services

WHY EARLY CHILDHOOD?

- A child's brain grows the fastest in early childhood
- Investments in early childhood yield significant dividends
- Supportive relationships and healthy environments are most critical in the early years
- 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

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
- **Children** receive physical and mental health screenings and interventions, are current with immunizations, and reach developmentally appropriate milestones
- **Families** can afford early childhood care and education
- **Early care and education professionals** are competent, credentialed, and effective
- **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**

In the Kansas mixed-delivery system for early care and education, all families have informed, timely, and equitable access to quality services.

All families get the right services to match their level of need, taking into account their unique situations and experiences, to ensure every child thrives.

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Strategic collaboration across sectors and among both public and private investment partners ensures inclusive, broad-reaching, and sustainable implementation. Formalized agreements between the public sector (federal, state, local, and tribal officials or agencies) and the private sector (families, employers, philanthropies, media, civic groups, and service providers) are integral to a robust and responsive early care and education system.

Early Childhood Care and Education

MIXED-DELIVERY SYSTEM



**KANSAS
CHILDREN'S CABINET
AND TRUST FUND**

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The **Blueprint for Early Childhood** originated in 2014 and incorporated several cross-sector efforts to build a Kansas early childhood system. The current Blueprint, updated in July 2022, adds the voices of over 6,100 Kansans and aligns efforts of the Cabinet and other state agencies through a 2019 federal planning grant. Authorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act, this grant started Kansas on a journey of unprecedented collaboration and growth for our state's early childhood system. Partnering agencies include the Kansas Department for Children and Families, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and the Kansas State Department of Education.