

CIF BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

June 5, 2020



The Role of the Children's Cabinet

1. **Per K.S.A. 38-1901, we recommend continued emphasis on the Children's Cabinet role as the coordinating entity and governance hub for the Kansas early childhood system.** The Children's Cabinet will lead the work to implement the All in for Kansas Kids Strategic Plan; align goals, funds, and outcomes across agencies to better serve children and families; and propose actions needed for a seamless delivery system.

Children's Cabinet Commitment to Equity

The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund (The Cabinet) recognizes that equitable life outcomes start with an early childhood system that acknowledges children and families experience disproportionate access and opportunity across race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical and developmental abilities, home language, and geography. Equity is an organizing principle of the *All in for Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan. The Cabinet is committed to meeting the diverse and unique needs of all Kansas families by integrating systems-wide approaches to ensure basic needs are available and accessible, elevating family voice and choice, utilizing data in ethical, timely and responsive ways in partnership with communities and a broad array of experts, and equitably funding programs.

The Children's Initiatives Fund Budget Recommendation

2. **In this time of crisis, we recommend the Children's Initiative Fund (CIF) should be maintained at level funding.** It is imperative to protect the ability of the state to draw down federal funds. CIF-funded programs are providing crucial support to children and families affected by the COVID-19 crisis, likely preventing larger, more expensive problems down the road. Extensive needs, as documented in the comprehensive Needs Assessment conducted in 2019, existed in Kansas prior to the onset of COVID-19 and available funding falls far short of what is needed to adequately and equitably offer services to all eligible children.
3. **In future years, or should the state budget outlook improves for FY22, we recommend funding of CIF be increased to meet exacerbated need in the state, as documented in our 2019 Needs Assessment and as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. In addition, programs which do not function as part of the mixed-delivery early childhood care and education system should be moved to the State General Fund.** The Children's Cabinet will require greater ability to manage the funding portfolio, to effectively coordinate across agencies to pivot and meet new needs as they arise and develop.

CIF Budget Proposal

Program	FY 2020 Funding	Proposed FY 2021 Funding
Autism Diagnosis	\$50,000	\$50,000
Child Care Assistance	\$5,033,679	\$5,033,679
Child Care Quality Initiative	\$500,000	\$500,000
Children’s Mental Health Waiver	\$3,800,000	\$3,800,000
Early Childhood Block Grant	\$18,127,914	\$18,127,914
Family Preservation Services	\$3,241,062	\$3,241,062
Infant Toddler Hearing Aid Bank	\$50,773	\$50,773
Infant-Toddler Services	\$5,800,000	\$5,800,000
Kansas Preschool Pilot	\$4,200,000	\$4,200,000
KIDS Network	\$96,374	\$96,374
Parents as Teachers	\$8,437,635	\$8,437,635
Maternal & Child Health Home Visiting	\$250,000	\$250,000
Tobacco Use Prevention Program	\$1,001,960	\$1,001,960
Start Young	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000

Data and Evaluation

In 2019, the Cabinet recommended the establishment of an Early Childhood Integrated Data system (ECIDS) and appointment of an ECIDS Core Team. While an ECIDS is the ultimate goal, we need to continue to take steps to better understand program impact on children and families in a way that can inform systemic decision-making.

4. **The Cabinet’s Accountability Process should be aligned with the All In for Kansas Kids Strategic Plan.** In addition to gathering information on the services and outcomes of programs funded by the CIF, the 2021 Accountability Process should be revised to monitor progress according to the goals and tactics outlined in the strategic plan. This would put in place a formal annual process to assess progress and make decisions about the upcoming year, and would provide necessary context to make programmatic and funding recommendations to the Governor.
5. **A pilot study should be initiated to link Early Childhood Block Grant data to Department of Children and Families data.** This pilot study would serve two purposes: it would use existing data in a novel way to answer a critical question about the impact of services on family well-being, and it would also serve as an opportunity to pilot secure data sharing across agencies.

Crisis Management

The public health emergency created by COVID-19 added incredible stress to the early childhood care and education system. As documented in our 2019 comprehensive, statewide Needs Assessment, a variety of factors were already cause for concern. In order to help safeguard health and well-being of Kansas children, and to help ensure they have the best possible start in life we recommend the following be considered by the Governor, the Kansas Legislature and our state agency partners as the state addresses COVID-19 recovery:

6. **Given the nature of the current public health crisis, we recommend the Children’s Cabinet and other state agencies responsible for serving children and families should continue ongoing alignment and**

collaboration efforts to effectively address emergent needs. State-level coordination efforts, which began in earnest in January 2019, positioned the Kansas early childhood care and education system to quickly respond to the initial COVID-19 crisis. The complex nature of the crisis now demands a ramp up of this work to continue mitigating damage and aid in the recovery effort to ensure an early childhood care and education system remains standing and then thriving in the months and years ahead.

7. **Given the current pandemic and its continued impact on the families and children of Kansas, the current vital financial assistance programs for child care (Hero Relief Program) should be extended utilizing federal COVID-19 resources.** This is in keeping with the Cabinet's recommendation in 2019 to increase access to work and family support programs that help children and families meet their basic needs.
 8. **Dedicate funding to address technology disparities in rural Kansas through policy and infrastructure initiatives.** Many families lack basic technology to access virtual services and provide learning continuity in the face of social distancing measures. Given the likelihood of resurgence of COVID-19 outbreaks, addressing technological infrastructure gaps will be necessary for early childhood service delivery and equitable access. Possible strategies include fostering partnerships with internet service providers to fill technology gaps, and providing early childhood service providers with hotspots to distribute to families.
 9. **Provide ongoing support to child care providers to ensure that they can remain open and able to provide safe care and healthy environments for children.** The crisis has made clear that child care is essential not only for keeping our children safe and healthy, but also to support a functioning economy. There is a pressing need to better equip essential childcare providers with the ability to serve families virtually, accommodate school aged children, provide access to nutritious food and cleaning supplies needed for preventing the spread of illness. Policy initiatives must be in place to help childcare providers access bulk purchases of food, PPE and cleaning items during times of scarcity. Further, childcare providers must receive better support with technology access and training, as many are continuing to provide virtual early learning support to their quarantined families.
 10. **Leverage the role of early childhood service providers to meet the needs of their local communities and the families they serve.** Service providers are acting as a key connector and source of support for families during this crisis, particularly for those who are most vulnerable and/or socially isolated. Community level partnerships that include public health officials, public school districts, economic development leaders and local businesses, and local elected officials should also include child care providers and parents.
 11. **The Cabinet recommends the Governor and the Kansas Legislature increase access to work and family support programs that help children and families meet their basic needs.** Research clearly shows that children thrive when their basic needs are met, and that parents and caregivers are better able to support children when their own basic needs are met. The Cabinet believes current restrictions to child care assistance, cash assistance, nutrition assistance and health insurance programs undercut the investments made through the CIF and blunt the efficacy of early childhood care and education programs. The 2019 comprehensive, statewide Needs Assessment documents these concerns.
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