

KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD RECOMMENDATIONS PANEL MEETING Friday, September 18, 2020

Visit the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund website for meeting materials and the [YouTube recording: https://kschildrenscabinet.org/panel-meetings/](https://kschildrenscabinet.org/panel-meetings/)

Members Present

Nichelle Adams, Kansas Department for Children and Families

Jennifer Adhima, Project Eagle, University of Kansas Medical Center

Marites Altuna, Kansas Deaf-Blind Project

Rachel Anno, Kansas Department for Children and Families

Mallory Arellano, Newman University

Emily Barnes, Barnes Child Care

Deanna Berry, Russell Child Development Center

Gail Cozadd, Kansas Children's Service League

Rachele Fiorito, United Way of the Plains

Kelly Frantz-Langford, TARC, Inc.

Eva Horn, University of Kansas Department of Special Education

Peggy Kelly, Kansas Head Start Association

Kim Kennedy, Kansas Department for Children and Families

Emily Killough, Children's Mercy Kansas City

Lorrena (Lori) Kravitz, Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Cornelia Stevens, TOP Early Learning Centers

Karen Pahls

Tanya Bulluck, Child Start

David Lindeman, University of Kansas Life Span Institute at Parsons

Kelli Mark, Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Natalie McClane, Kansas State Department of Education

Dee Rankin, Child Start, Inc.

Amy Meek, Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund

Paula Neth, The Family Conservancy

Patti Peschel, Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities, Inc.

Amanda Petersen, Kansas State Department of Education

Angie Saenger, Child Care Aware of Kansas

Jan Scheideman, Riley County Health Department

Chelsea Schulte, Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities, Inc.

Christi Smith, DCCCA

Heather Staab, Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Amber Tankersley, Pittsburg State University

Reva Wywadis, Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas

Welcome: Amanda Petersen called the meeting to order with a quorum present, described processes for a remote meeting, and directed participants to the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund website for meeting materials: <https://kschildrenscabinet.org/panel-meetings/>

Meeting Agenda:

Lori Kravitz moved to approve the agenda and Amy Meek seconded, with a unanimous vote to approve the agenda as presented.

August 21, 2020 Meeting Minutes:

David Lindeman moved to approve the August minutes and Cornelia Stevens seconded, with a unanimous vote to approve the August minutes as presented.

Follow-up from last meeting

- Debbie Deere provided recap:
 - "Good Beginnings Last a Lifetime" campaign and how consistent messaging with community partners can support early childhood in communities. Recommendation to form a workgroup to focus on developing consistent messaging.
 - Kansas workforce registry update. Linda Logan and Patty Peschel working on developing components for the registry to share with the Panel in the future. Hannah McGahey currently helping with the workgroup in her new role.
- Amanda Petersen thanked Chelsea Schulte for leading and Peggy Kelly supporting work to revise the *Role, Norms, and Procedures of the Panel* document to make the language clearer and more accessible. The Panel will consider these revisions in several months when it revisits the document.

Kindergarten transitions workgroup update

- Peggy Kelly
 - One meeting held to date.
 - Broken into two workgroups. The first is working on MOU document to be used as a tool for implementation. The second is focused on a worksheet/template. Both groups have already begun meeting.
 - Goal is to present this MOU template to the Panel at the October meeting.
 - Next meeting is on September 29th to plan future steps and present at the October Panel meeting.

Kansans' Open Forum - Written and Verbal Comments:

None presented

Kansas COVID-19 Response

Overview of today's discussion - Amanda Petersen

- We have been coping with the pandemic for about six months. Today Panel members can reflect on what we've learned so far from a big-picture perspective. We will discuss bright spots and areas that we can identify and the state should focus on moving forward.
- Federal, state, and local governments have launched many new programs to address the pandemic. Panel members each bring important knowledge about what new initiatives affect them. If they do not yet know that a new program is available, that is also valuable perspective.
- Kansas work to address COVID-19 as it relates to early childhood includes, but is not limited to:
 - The Kansas Hero Relief Program (<http://ksherorelief.com/>) provides support paying for both child care and health care costs for essential workers.
 - Programs listed on the Children's Cabinet website <https://kschildrenscabinet.org/cares-act-support-for-early-childhood/>:
 - The **Early Childhood Workforce Health Fund** pays or reimburses for medical expenses directly attributable to COVID-19 testing and treatment as part of the Kansas Hero Relief program.
 - **Child Care Facility Grants**: Child Care Health Consultants will be available to all child care facilities licensed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. Consultants will advise on actions or modifications needed to meet health and safety recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses.
 - The **Technology for Families Program** provides connectivity, equipment, and devices to support virtual access for families receiving home visiting services.
 - Kansas Quality Network has information on COVID-19 resources and financial supports for Kansas families and child care providers: <https://ksqualitynetwork.org>

Overview of funding allocated by the Strengthening People and Revitalizing Kansans (SPARK) Task Force - Melissa Rooker

- Kansas received approximately \$1 billion dollars of federal relief funding that must be spent by the end of December 2020. The SPARK Task Force has approved three rounds of funding:
 - Round 1 funding was distributed to counties. The Children's Cabinet shared ideas for using these funds to support early childhood programs. Local governments decided how to disperse these funds.
 - Round 2 funding included \$9.9 million for three early childhood initiatives:

- The **Early Childhood Workforce Health Fund** pays or reimburses for medical expenses directly attributable to COVID-19 testing and treatment. This directly applies to those who are uninsured or underinsured.
 - **Child Care Facility Grants:** Child Care Health Consultants will be available to all child care facilities licensed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. Consultants will advise on actions or modifications needed to meet health and safety recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses.
 - The **Technology for Families Program** provides connectivity, equipment, and devices to support virtual access for families receiving home visiting services.
- In Round 3, the Committee really understood that child care is essential to business resilience and economic recovery.
 - On September 17 the State Finance Council approved \$40 million dollars to support learning sites and supervision for school-aged children during the school day when their school is in a hybrid or remote learning mode.
 - Melissa emphasized that state policymakers want to help licensed child care providers with the capacity to support school-aged children. Licensed providers can help children access the internet and attend school remotely, with the supervision of a safe, licensed child care provider. First and foremost, policymakers hope to use these funds to help licensed providers deliver services to students learning remotely. For providers that have licensed capacity for that age group who are not currently open, policymakers want to provide that support, maybe by also using available Child Care Facilities Grants, to allow them to re-open and offer these services.
 - Programs operating before and after-school programs that can open during the school day are also eligible for these funds.
 - Other types of community providers - groups like YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, faith-based providers - will be able to apply. Those applications will be carefully evaluated for funding disbursements.
 - Funding will be distributed on a rolling basis. The Children's Cabinet is working with the Office of Recovery to get applications for funding out as soon as possible. Some services began at the start of the school year and funding will be available retroactively.
- The SPARK Committee will keep in reserve approximately \$20 million in additional CARES Act funding. The State Finance Council could approve these funds to support early childhood, but there are many competing demands for funding.
- Emily Barnes thanked Melissa for her comments. As an individual child care provider and engaged member of the Child Care Providers Coalition of Kansas,

providers have shared a great deal of worry - thank you for recommending that providers deliver the services that they are able to, within the scope of their license. Recommended that policymakers consider how we can share this message with providers, so that they can understand the difference between children's education supervision needs and child care needs.

- Melissa confirmed that the Children's Cabinet will do their best to make this clear in communications. This is a program that the Children's Cabinet developed in collaboration with the child care licensing division at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the child care subsidy division at the Kansas Department for Children and Families. We have all worked hard to improve the level of quality and safety for licensed child care providers - we know how much work it is for providers to become licensed, and we do not want a new program to undermine our state's licensed network of providers. Please carefully review the Child Care Facilities Grant funding opportunity. That is intended to be a support for child care providers struggling to meet the public health requirements for safe operation. The goal in creating this funding was to be thoughtful of providers who are working hard to meet the needs of the families in their programs.

The Panel discussed: What are our lessons learned or bright spots to keep as we move forward?

- Through the SPARK funding, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment has \$8 million dollars for the Kansas HERO Relief fund. This pays for medical expenses for essential workers who have tested positive for COVID-19 who are uninsured or underinsured. People can visit <http://ksherorelief.com/> to learn more and to apply through the end of December.
- Kansas Hero Relief funds included Essential Worker Bonus funds, which helped to help support a wide range of essential workers. This made a large impact to help those workers access affordable child care. Revenue replacement and supply grants also supported child care providers who were financially struggling.
 - Funding was available for any and all providers with an identified need, using a short, simple application process.
 - Expanded eligibility for child care subsidy meant that more families could benefit.
 - These funds have to be spent by 10/31/20, so unsure of the sustainability moving forward - the financial need will continue as the pandemic continues.
 - Perhaps there are certain health and safety policies, such as extra cleaning, that early childhood care and education providers should have been implementing all along - maybe not daily temperature screenings, but the understanding that parents should monitor their children for symptoms of illness and keeping them home if they may be sick, and employers should support for families caring for sick family members.
 - Ways to sustain the availability of supplies that providers need to maintain these health and safety standards

- More families can benefit from the changes in the subsidy eligibilities. If this can be maintained long term, it could continue to help many families.
- Providers can help parents and employers understand that children with symptoms need to stay out of child care environments to protect the health and safety of others.
- Hopefully, the pandemic will elevate the importance of early childhood for our society and improve both public and private investments moving forward. There is a gap between what families can afford to pay and what is actually required to provide quality care. Where can additional dollars come from to maintain the quality of care that is needed, instead of always putting those costs back to the parents.
- A reminder that during round 2 of the additional funding, the state has approved funding for child care providers to receive free testing for COVID-19. This is an effort to reduce "hot spots" due to lack of testing.
- The pandemic underscores the need for Medicaid expansion. There is a comprehensive need for access to health care, by both child care providers and families. Families have comprehensive needs, like food security and economic security. Until we meet those needs, children are not going to fully thrive.
- Child care providers need support in empowering themselves to take sick days to care for their health. Providers frequently work while they are sick because they either cannot afford to take an unpaid sick day or because they do not feel like they can ask families to not have child care that day. Providers need to be empowered to tell families that they need to take a sick day to protect their families' health, and have financial support to do that whether it is through subsidies or their own program's policies.
 - *Follow up for Panel staff: Research policy options in this area. How do we do this in a way that allows families and providers to succeed?*

What should the state of Kansas prioritize moving forward?

- The Family First Coronavirus Relief Act (federal COVID-19 response funds) provided 80 hours of paid leave for an employee who needs to quarantine or care for a sick family member. However, as we move through the pandemic, workers (including child care providers) may need to quarantine multiple times. They may use up the 80 hours of paid federal leave, deplete their vacation or sick leave balances, and then face a choice between losing wages while they take unpaid leave to quarantine or continuing to work and exposing the people they work with. Long term, are there additional ways that we can pay our staff to reduce the risk of additional exposures.
- The early childhood care and education workforce is disproportionately women and disproportionately people of color. Insufficient paid time off creates major barriers to protecting the people around us by staying home when we are sick.
- 80 hours of leave isn't just for individual workers - it is also for when a child or family member is infected, possibly multiple times. It is very much a reality that people will need more than 80 hours of leave.
- Recognizing child care providers as small business owners and providing a support system for business models and business plans to help them sustainably survive crises.

- It is important to keep in mind how, at the at the state and local level, we can efficiently and effectively coordinate an array of early childhood programs and services across multiple agencies and organizations. Strong collaboration is needed to identify linkages among existing initiatives and gaps.
- It will be important to sustain the Child Care Health Consultants past the pandemic. Providers had been asking for additional support and advice. Having expert support will be Invaluable.
- It has been helpful to open up who can deliver services and to deliver services via telehealth, and be reimbursed via Medicaid. Can our group shape policymaking in this area?
- Kansas is receiving technical assistance from national experts through the Pediatrics Supporting Parents workgroup. During the pandemic, Kansas has opened up Medicaid codes, particularly around Part C. Kansas has gotten maternal depression screening covered by Medicaid during the child well-visit, which is a big win. The workgroup is currently looking at care coordination: both creating a statewide definition of care coordination and then looking at how Medicaid can cover those services.
- Supply chain challenges for child care providers remain a concern, especially in rural parts of the state. Providers might struggle to find supplies, especially if there are limits on purchasing certain items or lack of availability. This is an immediate need and one that will remain in the future during a "traditional" flu season as well.
- Another bright spot is the emergence of professional learning to help support child care providers in business planning over the past few years. As those grants and training courses continue to help providers set up the business side of their programs, a major piece needs to be crisis planning specific to health: how do providers write that into contracts with families and policies. When you are a provider, caring for yourself is also caring for the children and families you serve.

**Understanding other councils, committees, and workgroups with an early childhood focus:
Purpose and Current Priorities**

- *Early Childhood Recommendations Panel*
 - Purpose- advisory group to the Kansas Children’s Cabinet and Trust Fund
- *Workforce Development Advisory Group*
 - Purpose- advocate for interests of the early childhood workforce through conversations surrounding quality, continuing education, industry culture, and workforce equity.
- *Kansas Power of the Positive Coalition*
 - Purpose- A statewide coalition that is committed to all Kansas children growing up in safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments. The coalition’s focus is on societal interventions to prevent adverse childhood experiences and

believes the conditions in which families live, including influence of family friendly workplace policies and practices, are key.

- *Child Care Systems Improvement Team*

- Purpose- Serves in an advisory capacity to KDHE and the Environment Child Care Licensing Program. The team is a diverse group including parents, child care providers, business and community partners, and agency partners. Work of the team is to lead to outcomes that will increase the effectiveness of the Child Care Licensing Program and increase the availability of quality child care.

- *Family Advisory Council*

- Purpose- aims to achieve satisfaction of special health care services for families of infants, children and youth with special health care needs by advising and promoting opportunities for individuals with health care needs/disabilities to exercise self-determination.
- This will expand to include more domains of families, including women and mothers, adolescents, and men.

- *State Interagency Coordinating Council*

- Purpose- is to ensure that a comprehensive service delivery system of integrated services is available in Kansas to all children with, or at risk of, developmental delays from birth through age five and their families.

- *State Home Visiting Leadership Team*

- Purpose- to elevate and sustain the early childhood home visitation system assuring lifelong benefits and values for all Kansas children and families.

- *Kansas Maternal Child Health Council*

- Purpose- to advise the Secretary of Health and Environment and others on ways to improve the health of families in Kansas, focusing on the Maternal Child Health population.

- *Links to Quality Advisory Group*

- Purpose- to assist the Links to Quality program staff in the development and implementation of the quality recognition and improvement statewide system.

- *Governor's Behavioral Health Services Planning Council's Children's Subcommittee*

- Purpose- is dedicated to maintaining the community-based family driven values of the Kansas children's public mental health system of care. The subcommittee makes recommendations to improve the Kansas public mental health system and ensure the needs of children and families are met.
- Noted an important connection to the Panel's previous conversation on making policy changes so that Medicaid can support the needs of children and families. The Pediatrics Supporting Parents workgroup may want to review this work.

- *Family First/ Kansas Strong Statewide Interagency Advisory Board*
 - Purpose- to establish a collaborative and effective initiative that develops, implements, and evaluates strategies that will improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes, by enhancing agency and court/legal practices and reducing systemic barriers.
- *Governor's Council On Education Early Childhood Subcommittee*
 - Purpose- Kansas families have universal and equitable access to a coordinated, high-quality, mixed-delivery system of programs serving children from birth to eight years of age throughout the state with the goal of improving kindergarten readiness and ensuring a seamless transition into the early grades. A focus on early childhood integrated data systems.

What important councils, committees, and workgroups are missing from this landscape?

- Emily Barnes - highlighted the Child Care Providers Coalition of Kansas. An organization created by family child care providers to support that work. Current priorities include providing regional in-person professional development, particularly in lower-populated areas. The Child Care Providers Coalition of Kansas can be a strong partner in sharing information, gathering feedback from members, and advocating for policy change.
- Amanda Petersen - agreed that professional associations are an important piece of our state early childhood system.

How can the Panel engage with other councils, committees and workgroups?

- Kelly Frantz-Langford - found this discussion enlightening. Great to see these organizations listed in one place and suggested a map or directory to share this information.
- Amanda Petersen - noted that if Panel members or early childhood stakeholders know who serves on each of these groups, they know who to reach out to when they have questions or information to share.
- *Follow up for Panel staff: Consider how to pull this information together into a resource that can be shared with early childhood stakeholders.*
- Amanda Petersen - The goal of an effective system is to move meaningful work forward without duplicating effort. The Panel can identify where there is gaps or value to add, and where information can be shared or work passed along to other groups/councils.

Requests for future agenda items

- Christi Smith identified an issue for consideration: allowing foster families to become licensed child care providers.
 - Lori Kravitz agreed that this is a good issue to consider and suggested the Child Care Systems Improvement Team lead that conversation.

- Peggy Kelly identified an issue for consideration: ensuring that children in licensed Head Start programs can play on the same playground during the same time as children in other licensed child care programs in the same physical site.
 - Lori Kravitz agreed that this is a good issue to consider and suggested the Child Care Systems Improvement Team lead that conversation.

Upcoming Meetings

Kindergarten Transitions Workgroup - September 29, 9:00 a.m.

Recommendations Panel - Friday, October 16, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. via Zoom

Starting in October, the Panel will be meeting on the third Friday of each month beginning at 9 a.m.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.