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Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

**Kristin Pedersen**  
University of Kansas Speech Language Hearing Clinic

**Patty Peschel**  
Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities, Inc.

**Deidre Rankin**  
Child Start

**Sarah Rivers**  
Via Christi Rehabilitation

**Angie Saenger**  
Child Care Aware of Kansas

**Jan Scheideman**  
Rile County Health Department

**Chelsea Schulte**  
Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities, Inc.

**Cassandra Sines**  
Sines Virtual Assistant Service

**Christi Smith**  
DCCCA

**Heather Staab**  
Kansas Department of Health and Environment

**Cornelia Stevens**  
TOP Early Learning Centers

**Amber Tankersley**  
Pittsburg State University

**Reva Wywadis**  
Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas
Amanda Petersen, Chair
Kansas State Department of Education

I am the Director of Early Childhood, Kansas State Department of Education, prior to coming to KSDE I worked in policy advocacy.

I am so excited that the Panel can help us build a state where every Kansan gets the chance to thrive – I have no doubt that together we can lead the world in the success of each student! Personal interests include enjoying a good cup of hot tea, spending time with my four-legged family members (dog Romeo, horse Polo), and projects around our new home in Lawrence with my husband Mat.
Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Nichelle Adams  
Kansas Department for Children and Families

I currently work as the Early Education and Child Care Services Manager for the Kansas Department of Children and Families (DCF). I have been with DCF for 15 years in various positions, including serving as a business analyst for our benefit eligibility system, staff development specialist for Economic and Environmental Services (EES) programs, and determined eligibility for EES human services programs. Prior to that I determined eligibility for most state medical programs that involved children. I was a home visitor for Early Head Start and Healthy Families in the past. I have also been a director at a child care center.

I will serve on the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel as the representative of the state agency responsible for child care. DCF is the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) lead agency. The main focus of the CCDF funds is to increase the availability, affordability and quality of child care. The work we do with CCDF funds ultimately serves to help improve the lives of Kansas children and this is also the central role of the Kansas Early Childhood Recommendations Panel. Helping children is my true passion.

I love oil painting, fishing, cooking and my family, including my husky.
I am currently the Associate Director of Project Eagle, a program that is part of the University of Kansas Medical Center’s Institute for Community Engagement. Our program offers Early Head Start home visiting and Early Head Start/Head Start center-based services, ABC home visiting, and a centralized intake and referral program, Connections, to children and families in Wyandotte County, KS. I have worked for Project Eagle for fifteen years. Prior to joining Project Eagle, I worked with youth in programs focused on HIV/AIDS and sexual violence prevention.

As a macro-level social worker who believes wholeheartedly that the most effective way to make lasting change for children and families is through systems building, policy, and advocacy, I am eager to learn from this group and be part of this work that could benefit all Kansans, especially our youngest and most vulnerable Kansans.

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time traveling and exploring new places with my spouse and daughter, watching my daughter play tennis, and laughing with friends as much as possible.
I serve as the Director of the Kansas Deaf-Blind Project. Before my current position, I was an early interventionist and family service coordinator for children with special needs 0-3. I taught early childhood special education in an inclusive preschool setting and was a teacher of students with visual impairments providing direct services to children pre-K to 12th grade.

I have a bachelor’s degree from the University of Missouri - Kansas City in Speech and Hearing Science, and master’s degrees in Early Childhood Special Education and Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Kansas and an endorsement in Teaching English as a Second Language. I obtained training in deaf-blindness from Utah State University and in visual impairments from Missouri State University. I am a member of organizations that support individuals with special needs. These include the National Family Association for the DeafBlind, Council for Exceptional Children, and Pediatric Cortical Visual Impairment Society.

I am affiliated with business organizations such as the Kansas City Diversity and Inclusion Consortium, Kansas City Kansas Women’s Chamber of Commerce, and the National Association of Asian American Professionals. I serve as an ambassador for the KCK Chamber of Commerce, board member for the KC Blind All-Stars Foundation, and Diversity Inclusion Global Council member for the YMCA of Greater Kansas City.

It is an honor serving in the Kansas Early Childhood Recommendations Panel representing the needs of all children and those who are blind, visually impaired, or with combined hearing and vision loss; as well as working in partnership with various organizations and agencies to best meet the needs of Kansas children and families.
Hello, I am the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) Program Manager with the Early Childhood Programs, Kansas Department for Children and Families. I started with the DCF in February 2018 as the QRIS Supports Manager and advanced to the position of QRIS Program Manager in October of 2019. In my position, I work closely within DCF, other State agencies, and partners within the field of early childhood and early childhood education. Last year I assisted in the update of Family Engagement Standards, and currently participate with the Workforce Development Advisory group. Along with this, I co-chair the Outreach and Recruitment committee within DCF as we work to support Families and Early Childhood Provider’s needs within the State of Kansas.

I serve on the Recommendation Panel as a Representative for the Kansas Department for Children and Families as the QRIS Program Manager. The Kansas QRIS is known as Links to Quality and we work to support, recognize and improve quality within child care and early education. My goal with Links to Quality and the Recommendations Panel is to create increased access to quality early education for all Kansas children.

I have 2 adult sons (Cody and Ethan), a daughter-in-law (Julie), also a very active 5-year-old granddaughter (Chevelle) and a 2-year-old grandson (Rutledge). I am an avid sports fan who can be found rooting on the Royals and the Chiefs.
I am in my 3rd year working for Newman University as an instructor and coordinator for our Early Childhood Unified program. I previously worked for USD 457 Garden City Public Schools in special education and early childhood. I was on our Autism team for the district and provided services for those wonderful kiddos.

I am a huge advocate for early interventions and early childhood/ preschool education. I would like to contribute to this movement for providing quality early childhood education for all children across Kansas. I am very excited to be a part of a group that sees the importance of early childhood in Kansas!

I enjoy playing with my 2 and 4-year old children, playing board games with friends and families, skiing, dancing, and volleyball.
Hello!! I am a family child care provider in Olathe, KS and have operated Barnes Childcare for 7 years. Initially this was an attempt to use my professional skills while taking care of my family, but it has turned into my passionate focus for my career. My background includes special education and applied behavior analysis. Throughout my career I have supported people from young infants up to adults. Previously, I have supported adults in residential and vocational settings to increase their independence. As a behavior consultant I supported individuals in their homes, schools, and work places in situations with difficult behavior or learning skills. I also taught at my eldest’ Montessori school.

I understand and enjoy development, learning, and behavior and I love seeing the “ah-ha” moments when a person learns a new skill. Watching children learn amazes me, but the moment a parent begins to show confidence in themselves reminds me of why our field is so crucial. Being both a parent and a professional in early childhood, I understand the needs and successes families face. I look forward to seeing families supported through the work that the Recommendations Panel will do. Children deserve our best effort!
Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Deanna Berry
Russell Child Development Center

I have served in the role of Executive Director at USD #457/Greenbush Southeast Kansas and USD #609 Russell Child Development Center, Garden City, KS since 2005. Prior to that, I worked at High Plains Educational Cooperative as Special Education Coordinator/Assistant Director and School Psychologist Early Childhood-21 years from 1999-2001. I also taught 5th grade/Migrant Education Coordinator at Brewster USD #314.

As the Executive Director of a nonprofit agency providing a range of early childhood programs and services throughout 19 southwest Kansas counties, I have a keen interest in all initiatives that affect the well-being of the young children and families we serve.

I am interested in serving on the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel because the perspective I can bring to the table is representative of my history and experience, my professions, my partners, my communities, and my/our little ones.

I serve on numerous statewide and local organizations and committees that benefit early childhood.
I have been with Child Start since 2014, becoming the Child Care Resource and Referral Director in 2019. I am responsible for overseeing a variety of services that impact more than 60% of children under age 5 each year in South-Central Kansas, as well as teachers, child care providers, daycare center staff, parents, grandparents, foster parents, and the general community. I earned an associate’s degree in Early Childhood Studies, a bachelor’s degree in Organizational Leadership from Southwestern College and a Master of Leadership from Southwestern College.

Aside from my full-time position, I am currently an adjunct faculty member in the Early Childhood Education Department at Butler Community College and a CDA Specialist through the Council for Professional Recognition.

This panel is full of knowledgeable, passionate, dedicated and diverse leaders in the early childhood community. I am excited to join this team and support the efforts towards the overall improvement of early childhood experiences for the families and children we serve. Having leaders from all types of agencies and organizations working collectively to meet the needs of our families and children and improve their overall early childhood experiences, is essential to providing them with the foundation for lifelong success.

I am a proud Air Force spouse and an even prouder mother of three pretty neat children, ages 17, 15 and 10.
I have been employed with Kansas Children’s Service League (KCSL) for 14 years, but became the CEO on January 1, 2020. It has been an interesting first year in my new role! I graduated with my Bachelors of Social Work in 1996 from KU; and have been in the field of children and family services since that time. I worked for Social and Rehabilitation Services for nine years (known now as the Department for Children and Families), where I investigated child abuse and neglect, with an emphasis on cases of severe physical abuse and sexual abuse. In 2002 I completed my Master’s Degree in Social Work Administration. This emphasized program development, continuous quality improvement, human resource management, social service budgeting, and social policy. I recently served on the Child Welfare Systems Task Force. I am also the past board president for the Children’s Alliance of Kansas.

My hope for this panel is to improve collaboration among early childhood partners. But more importantly, my hope is to continue to elevate the importance of early childhood learning; and that early learning does not begin at age 3 or 4 but at birth! And finally, to create a sense of urgency for our state and business partners to invest in early childhood learning because of the long-term impact it has on our children as they become adults and ultimately our communities.

Personally, I love being outdoors and hiking. I also am an avid reader when I have time.
Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Rachele FioRito
United Way of the Plains

Upon graduating college in 2011, Rachele joined the Chicago Teach for America Corps with Noble Charter Schools. After her two year corps commitment she moved to Denver Colorado. While in Denver she worked as a high school Teacher, Librarian and later as an Assistant Principal in the KIPP Network of Charter Schools. While an Assistant Principal her school received consecutive Highly Distinguished School Awards. In January of 2020 Rachele moved to Wichita Kansas and began working at the United Way of the Plains as a Collective Impact Manager.
Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Jenny Flinders
University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research

As a Research Project Manager with the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships & Research (CPPR), I have supported community-based programming and early childhood development in Kansas for the past five years. It has especially been an honor and a privilege to work with indigenous communities on cultural, historical, and language revitalization efforts focused on early childhood, community health, and intergenerational wellbeing. I am committed to educating on the cumulative effects of historical trauma for systemically-oppressed children and families today, and recently authored an online learning module for family support professionals on historical trauma and community-centered healing. In addition, I facilitate participatory narrative research efforts through the use of SenseMaker® at CPPR, an innovative mixed methods approach to hearing unique perspectives across communities to inform decision making and promote collaborative change.

I am currently completing my PhD in Education Leadership and Policy with research interests in indigenous education policy, historical trauma, and reconciliation in the education system.
My name is Jennifer Forker and I have been working in the early childhood education field for 20 years. I was a kindergarten teacher for 15 years in the Amish community of Yoder. I then transitioned to program coordinator of the early childhood education program at Hutchinson Community College. I continue to teach the early childhood education courses at Hutchinson Community College, as well as supervise the child care center on campus.

I am an advocate for early childhood education because I believe it is the most important profession! So much is riding on the development of young children and it is vital they have the necessary support to become the best that they can be!

In my free time I enjoy spending time at the lake with my family and pets.
My name is Kelly Frantz-Langford and I am the assistant director with TARC’s Children’s Services Department. We have several programs that support families with disabilities. Our largest program is TARC tiny-k which is the special education program for children from birth to three years. I am very active in advocating and supporting tiny-k networks across the state and I am currently president of the tiny-k Alliance advocacy group.

I am a graduate of the University of Kansas and have a master’s in early childhood special education. I have additional graduate credit hours in autism spectrum disorders. I am currently enrolled at Ft. Hays State University and working on my building administrator certification with an anticipated finishing date of Fall 2021.

I am extremely passionate about early childhood and supporting families. I am excited to join the panel with so many talented people that have the same interest!

My interests include spending time with my family. My husband and I have three children together and we love to attend their events and relax at home. I love to read and listen to audiobooks while commuting.
Amy Gottschamer
Googols of Learning

In 2008, I opened Googols of Learning Child Development Center in Lawrence. I have an M.A. in History and an M.Ed. in Early Childhood Education with an emphasis in Administration, a Program Director’s license for over 100 children, and a Director’s Credential from KS Association for the Education of Young Children (KSAEYC). I sit on the state board of KSAEYC and serve as the President of the Lawrence Chapter. For the past year, I've worked on the Workforce Development Committee, and locally I’ve worked with the Lawrence School District, as an advisor for the creation of their Teacher Cadet program and received some of their student interns until COVID set in.

Currently, I am actively involved in Douglas County’s COVID recovery team and am the Unit Leader for Childcare. My pet projects are kindergarten transitions and the Unifying Framework initiative by National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

I want to serve on the Recommendations Panel because this is such an interesting time for Early Childhood in Kansas. You can see the potential for the changes that can be made. I feel my education and direct provider experience will give a needed perspective. I’ve been an early childhood advocate for years, and this seems like an ideal way to serve. I think a benefit for each of us will be that we can actually see the changes being made and how our contributions will make an impact. How satisfying for us all!

My personal interests are: History, Genealogy, Quilting, Reading, Political Podcasts, and Audiobooks
Hello! I am Kim Hawkins, Assistant Director for Early Childhood for the Olathe Public Schools. I have been in education in Olathe for 22 years and have taught kindergarten and special education. I served as an elementary principal before working with our youngest learners.

I am excited to serve on the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel to help support the work providing high quality educational experiences for our young children and their families.

I have a daughter in college (who recently started working at the child development center on her campus!) and a son starting high school this year. In my time away from work, I enjoy reading and spending time with family and friends!
Sheila Hermocillo has worked as an Education Specialist for Bright Beginnings Early Childhood Center/ U.S.D. #443 Dodge City Public Schools since 2015.

Sheila holds a Bachelor’s Degree from Newman University in Elementary Education, and served as an early childhood teacher in the classroom for ten years. She also maintains a Master’s of Science Degree in Educational Leadership obtained through Kansas State University.

She maintains certification for CLASS Observations and coaching, PD Specialist for the Child Development Associate Credentialing process, and is also a EC LETRs Trainer.

Her current role and responsibilities include overseeing the early childhood education programming to meet state and federal grants, as well as district, state, and federal guidelines and initiatives through data aggregation, data analysis, instruction, observation, assessment, for the development of the whole child, teacher, and program.
I came to Kansas and the University of Kansas over 20 years ago by way of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. Vanderbilt is where I got my Ph.D. and Nashville is where I worked as an early educator (early intervention and early childhood special education) before moving to teach and conduct research in higher education/universities.

Supporting early childhood educators to provide equitable access and opportunities to learn and grow for each and every young child and their family is very important to me and provides me the inspiration and reinforcement to keep working hard and learning. KU and the state of Kansas have provided me with rich opportunities to continue to grow and develop as an early childhood educator.
I have worked at Kansas Head Start Association (KHSA), serving in the role of Executive Director since 2012. Prior to that, I worked at Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services from 1985-2011. The Head Start program serves children and families prenatal through age 5, to enhance child development and school readiness as well as family stability and well-being. Head Start is also committed to supporting quality early childhood services and interagency coordination within the community. KHSA works to support the early childhood system and enhance collaboration among early childhood partners in Kansas.

The work of the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel to streamline and coordinate accessing state supports, programs and funding streams is also a natural fit for KHSA. Working to create effective and efficient systems will improve services and experiences for families and organizations.

I enjoy making and listening to music, animals, reading, knitting, etc.
Kim Kennedy
Kansas Department for Children and Families

I work for the Department for Children and Families (DCF) as the Head Start Collaboration Director (HSCO). My career at DCF began in 2004 in the Economic Employment Services division with determining eligibility for DCF human services programs. Prior to that I worked as an early childhood special education teacher.

I will serve on the panel to assist the efforts of Head Start agencies to engage in effective coordination and collaboration. The role of the HSCO is to collaborate with entities involved in state and local planning processes to better meet the needs of low-income children from birth to school entry, and their families. The Early Childhood Recommendations Panel will provide Kansas with the opportunity to improve this coordination and delivery of early childhood education and development services. Early intervention is key to making a difference in the lives of children and families. As a member of the Panel, I look forward to being part of this work.

My personal interest includes: baking, reading, gardening and spending time outdoors. Most of all I enjoy spending time with my family.
I am a Pediatrician and an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the Children’s Mercy Kansas City and UMKC School of Medicine. I specialize in the evaluation of children presenting for medical care with concerns for child abuse and/or neglect, in both the inpatient and outpatient settings. I also serve as the Associate Program Director for the Pediatric Residency Program.

I have a strong interest in providing education regarding the medical aspects of child abuse as well as in improving communication and building partnerships among multidisciplinary team members and community organizations.

I am interested in the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel because I interact with many families who lack access to quality, affordable childcare and early childhood programs. I believe that improving access to safe and high-quality child care may help to prevent child abuse and neglect and can serve as an additional layer of support and connection for families within their communities.
Lorrena (Lori) Kravitcz
Kansas Department of Health and Environment

I have worked for Kansas Department of Health and Environment Child Care Licensing for the past 10 years, and the past 7 years as the director. Some of my additional work experience includes working with families through a not-for-profit providing mentoring and early intervention/prevention services, and as a Licensed Child Care Provider contracting with Early Head Start.

I believe that the child care licensing regulatory authority needs to be represented and actively participate. I have so much respect for all aspects of early childhood work and the individuals that do the work. As one of the first children in Kansas to participate in Head Start, I can tell you that our work with children makes a difference. It may not be immediately obvious, but the impact is real.

I love being outdoors, unless it is extremely hot or cold. My favorite activities I do with my husband include hiking, gardening, fishing or just sitting and watching the wildlife in the county. When weather does not cooperate with my outdoor plans, I enjoy reading and baking.
Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

David Lindeman
University of Kansas Life Span Institute at Parsons

I am the Director of the University of Kansas-Life Span Institute at Parsons, a center for research, training and exemplary services. I have over 30 years of experience in early childhood, special education, and university-based project development, implementation and management. I have been the director or co-director of over 50 funded federal and state grants. As the director of both preschool and early intervention service programs for children with disabilities, I have developed a number of grants based in these experiences including model demonstration projects, outreach training programs, in-service training programs for early intervention and preschool programs for children with disabilities, training and referral programs for child care providers and families, and inclusion of children with disabilities into community programs.

I currently serve as the Chair of the Kansas Interagency Coordinating Council on Early Childhood Developmental Services. I have experience as a presenter at state and national conferences, publications, provision of training and technical assistance, and have served on a number of national, state, and local committees, boards of directors, and advisory boards. I hold a PhD in Special Education from Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.

My interest in serving on the Kansas Early Childhood Recommendations Panel include insuring that professional development, training, and technical assistance for early childhood providers and the interests of children with disabilities and their families are address through the All in For Kansas Kids Early Childhood Strategic Plan.
I am the Director of the Children & Families Section within the Bureau of Family Health at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). I previously worked at KDHE in the Bureau of Community Health Systems, Primary Care and Rural Health. I have also spent many years in the inpatient hospital setting serving in clinical and administrative roles. The section I oversee within KDHE is home to several programs that focus on early childhood, such as Early Interventions, Children with Special Health Care Needs, Home Visiting, and Maternal and Child Health local programming.

I am passionate about serving on the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel to help ensure coordination and collaboration of services across the state, helping Kansas families have equitable access to services and ensure a seamless referral system is in place.

In my free time, I enjoy practicing Yoga, reading and spending time with family (including two fur babies!)
Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Natalie McClane  
Kansas State Department of Education

I am Natalie McClane, an Education Program Consultant on the Early Childhood Team at KSDE. I’ve been in my current position for 2 ½ years and before working at KSDE, I worked in the early childhood field for about 14 years as an Education Coordinator with Head Start. Before that, I was an elementary teacher for a short time.

I wanted to be on this panel so I could have a chance to help guide progress in the early childhood field across the state of Kansas alongside other early childhood leaders who know and value the importance of quality early childhood education.

My personal interests include spending time with my husband (also a teacher) and two boys 10 and 15, music, painting, sewing, and just crafting in general!

I am so excited to be on the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel with so many other early childhood experts from across our state and look forward to working and learning from you all.
I joined the Kansas Children’s Cabinet and Trust Fund in May 2015. Before joining the Cabinet, I spent six years at Community Action, Inc. in Topeka, first as the Early Childhood Education Coordinator and finally as the Director of Head Start and Early Head Start. I fostered collaborative partnerships with school districts and community entities in order to provide high-quality integrated services to at-risk children and families in Shawnee County. Prior to joining Community Action, Inc., I worked as an administrator for a hospital child care center and also worked in the pediatric and orthodontic dental field.

I have experience in program management, grant writing, policy development, and compliance with local, state and federal regulation. I have also participated in local and state early childhood leadership groups promoting comprehensive services for children 0-5.

I hold a BA in Human Development and Family Life with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education from the University of Kansas and a Master of Business Administration from Baker University.

As a representative of the Cabinet, I’m excited to serve on the panel to support the implementation of a coordinated, comprehensive early childhood delivery system that provides a solid foundation for families in Kansas so children can thrive.

In my free time I enjoy playing golf, game nights with my family, and fine art painting with watercolor.
Paula Neth
The Family Conservancy

I am the President/CEO of The Family Conservancy. I am an innovative, mission-driven executive leader with a track record of success advancing organizational growth, reputation, and impact. I have over thirty years of experience in building strong systems for young children and their families. The part of my current work that ignites my passion is how The Family Conservancy promotes the well-being of all children, particularly those who face serious racial inequality and socioeconomic risks.

The reason I wanted to serve on the panel is that I believe all Kansas children deserve the opportunity to grow up in a safe, supportive home and receive a quality education. I currently serve as Vice-President for the board of directors at Child Care Aware of America, as well as a member of the board of directors of Child Care Aware of Kansas, and the Children’s Campus of Kansas City.

I have a Master of Elementary and Early Childhood Education from the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

I love running and wake up at 5 a.m. every weekday morning to start with a run which helps center me for the day.
I currently work as a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) in USD 231 Gardner Edgerton, serving children Pre-K through grade 2, as well as children in the Communications and Life Skills programs. Most of my career was spent with USD 273 Beloit. After 10 years as an SLP in Beloit, I served as the Executive Director for Mitchell County Partnership for Children, administering our Smart Start, CBCAP and Early Childhood Block Grants. During that time, in addition to many multi-county community and school district programs, our community established the Mitchell County Early Learning Center, a child care center for children ages 6 weeks through age 5, as well as an after-school program. After relocating to Basehor in 2016, I worked as an early childhood SLP for USD 458 Basehor Linwood. Last year I had the honor of helping the district as they planned for the opening of their Early Learning Center which houses a staff child care center and inclusive preschool classrooms.

Advocating for young children, their families and early childcare providers has always been a passion of mine. I believe that all children in our state should have access to high quality, affordable, equitable and inclusive early care and education. It’s an exciting time in Kansas as our state-level leaders have collaborated like never before to bring an amazing opportunity to our state. The incredible work they have done to bring family and provider voices together to develop the Needs Assessment and the continued success in implementing the Strategic Plan inspires me further to be a part of the work happening around Early Childhood. As a member of the State Interagency Coordinating Council, I am able to stay informed of state level initiatives and it provides me the opportunity to impact our work on a state level. As a provider, serving just one school in Kansas, I want to serve on this panel so that I can have a greater impact on the young children and their families and providers in our great state.

My personal interests include gardening, golfing, kayaking and spending time with my family.
Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Kristin Pedersen
University of Kansas Speech Language Hearing Clinic

Kris Pedersen, SLPD CCC-SLP, is a Clinical Associate Professor in the Department of Speech-Language-Hearing where her work focuses on early intervention practices. She specializes in speech and language services for children from birth to age five, along with evidence-based practices in early intervention.
I am the Director of Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO). I have experience as a director and coordinator working on various quality improvement projects at both the state and national level for 19 years. I oversee the Workforce Development project and the Infant Toddler Specialist Network project, funded through the Department for Children and Families.

I have been a part of numerous state level committees and workgroups (e.g., Child Care Systems Improvement Team (CC-SIT), Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) State Advisory Team, Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) Advisory Board, Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP), Child Care Providers Coalition (CCPC).

I look forward to serving on the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel, as I am committed to partnering with key agencies and programs to increase the quality of our early care and education workforce in the state of Kansas.

My husband and I live in Manhappiness (Manhattan) with our four children.
I have been part of the Head Start family since I graduated from college 24 years ago. I have served young children and their families in the roles of Teacher, Center Manager, Education Coordinator, Health Senior Manager and now Assistant Director at Child Start 0-5 Early Childhood program (HS/EHS) in Wichita, Kansas.

I want to participate in the synergy that comes from building relationships with other early childhood professionals who are also seeking to improve early childhood systems and provide coordinated services to young children and their families. Serving as a member of the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel allows me to share my insight and experiences, while also learning from the experiences of other professionals.

I have four children (3 adults and 1 teenager) and 2 beautiful granddaughters (ages 7 and 3) who keep me very busy. I am currently working on my Master’s Degree in Organizational Leadership from Baker University. I love anything related to giraffes and the Wichita State Basketball program.
I work as an occupational therapist for Ascension Via Christi Rehabilitation and TheraPlay Spot. Prior to this, I worked for Rainbows United in Infant/Toddler Services. I volunteer for the Down Syndrome Society of Wichita and the PTO organizations at my girls' schools.

I am excited to participate with the Kansas Early Childhood Recommendations Panel. I am the parent of three girls from ages 9 to 4. The youngest has special needs.

My husband and I have been married 15 years. I enjoy spending time with family and friends, reading, and baking!
I have a 16-year background in early childhood system building and non-profit administration. My career began in human resources where I worked in both the for profit and non-profit settings. In 2006, I joined Heartland Programs (Head Start/Early Head Start/Parents as Teacher) helping to create high functioning teams in the classroom and home visiting divisions and sound personnel management policies and procedures that aligned with USD 305. In 2010, I endeavored to expand my passion for early childhood/child care in the Deputy Director position at Child Care Aware of Kansas. In this position, I work closely with the organization’s administrative team, state network program directors and our Child Care Research & Referral (CCR&R) partners. I focus on contract management, grant writing, and networking and collaboration with partners.

In serving on the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel, I am excited to learn about the creative things happening in support of child care providers, children, and families. This cross-functional group will help to pave the way for innovation and coordination among many agencies.

My passion for helping families meet their child care/early childhood needs stems from a supportive relationship with a family child care provider; my three children attended the same family child care program over a 10-year span! Every parent and child care provider in Kansas should have the opportunity for a supportive, caring friendship to grow, one like our family had with our provider. I cannot think of a more important connection that working parents need to be able to depend on than the relationship with their child’s early childhood teacher.
Jan Scheideman  
Riley County Health Department

I have been working in the early childhood field for 23 years. I was an early childhood special education teacher for 3 years with the Southwest Kansas Special Services Coop in Dodge City, Kansas. I then spent time in Minnesota teaching in a cooperative preschool and managing the community’s family support program. Returning to Kansas, I worked for Infant-Toddler Special Services in Wamego, Kansas and then transitioned to the center manager with NEK-CAP Head Start. I am currently the supervisor of Raising Riley (an ECBG grantee) in Manhattan, Kansas.

I’m not that person in the group that speaks out a lot...I am more of a listener. I enjoy sharing ideas and collaborating with others, examining and conquering issues as they arise and creating new approaches to engage children and families.

In my personal time I love to visit with my family and paint barn quilts.
My name is Chelsea Schulte and I work for Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities as the Program Coordinator for the Infant Toddler Service Network. Prior to this position, I worked as a Training and Technical Assistance Specialist and as a classroom teacher for children in both licensed child care and district settings.

My interest in serving on the panel stemmed from my experience navigating the early childhood system in my newest role, as a parent. As a professional in the field, I felt I had an advantage in locating quality child care for my daughter because I knew what to look for. Unfortunately, the lack of infant/toddler openings made my questions of quality irrelevant – simply finding a spot became my mission. Outside of my professional work, I enjoy spending time with family and cheering for K-State football.
Hi! I own Sines Virtual Assistant Services, an administrative business that helps entrepreneurs with their administrative needs. With my administrative skills in several different fields, I have 12 years of experience, specifically in the legal field. For the last several years, being my own boss has afforded me the opportunity to do a lot of advocacy work. I am currently the Maternal Child Health (MCH) Family Delegate for Kansas. I also serve on the Executive Committee of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) Special Health Care Needs Family Advisory Council.

I want to serve on this panel to help make the Early Childhood System a better system for families in Kansas, but more specifically to make sure the voice of special health care need families is heard as well.

I enjoy spending time with my husband and our two boys, who both have multiple special health care needs. I also enjoy traveling and reading books. My current project though is that I am in the process of writing our adoption journey in hopes that I can help other families know that they are not alone when things are tough and feel that no one understands what they’re going through.
I am the Director of Family Preservation for Kansas City at DCCCA. I have over 20 years of leadership experience in early childhood education, workforce development, community engagement and family preservation.

I have a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology and a Master’s degree in Business with an emphasis in organizational development. I thrive in environments where I can be innovative and work collaboratively to enhance organizational processes, improve systems and services offered to children and families. I feel fortunate to be able to live out my passion to help children and families thrive.

When not working, I enjoy spending time with my family. My husband and I have two boys; freshman and senior. We enjoy family outdoor activities and spending time with our dogs.
Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Heather Staab
Kansas Department of Health and Environment
I am the Executive Director of TOP Early Learning Centers. We have three high quality preschools in Wichita serving approximately 600 children each year. Data from our longitudinal study indicates that our students do well when they enter the k-12 system and our student outcomes have been published in the Journal for Research in Childhood Education.

I received my BA from Ohio University with a degree in Music Therapy, and later obtained my MBA from Baker University. I have worked for a diverse range of organizations, including the Kansas Children’s Service League as the South-Central Region Director, Mental Health Association of South-Central Kansas as the Director of Compeer/Volunteer Services, ResCare Kansas Life Choices as a Day Program Coordinator and the Ohio Department of Corrections as the Director of Activity Therapy. In these roles, I coordinated volunteers, designed and implemented programs supporting adults, children and families, helped establish the first prison based mental health unit for the department of corrections, had oversight of numerous programs that support children and families including the Sedgwick County Pre-K Collaborative, the Child Abuse Prevention Coalition, and Wichita’s first Crisis Nursery program all resulting in more than 25 years of experience developing collaborative partnerships, creating opportunities for new business development, assessing and identifying needed services, and monitoring the quality and effectiveness of those program.

My interest in serving on the Kansas Early Childhood Recommendations Panel stems from my years of experience serving children and families but most importantly because I know firsthand of the services and supports needed to support at risk children and families as I was once a single mother living in poverty.

I live with my husband in Wichita and our blended family includes five children ranging in age from 17 to 30 and 2 grandchildren ages 1 and 3. I enjoy singing and the performing arts, an interest that began as a young child when my mother opened a children’s theater in Miami, Florida. I also enjoy reading, spending time with family, and spending time outdoors.
Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Amber Tankersley
Pittsburg State University

I am professor in child development within the department of Family and Consumer Sciences at Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas. I teach courses in early childhood curriculum, interacting with children, parent/professional relationships, and I supervise practicum students and preschool student teachers.

I hold a bachelor’s degree in elementary/early childhood education, a master’s degree in elementary education, and a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction. I have worked in the field of early childhood for over 25 years as a preschool teacher, university child care center director, university instructor/professor and director of National Association Education in Young Children (NAEYC) accredited preschool lab.

I am a long-time member of NAEYC and a former governing board member and secretary of the Kansas Association Education of Young Children (KAEYC). I am serving a term (2020-2023) on the NAEYC Council for the Accreditation of Childhood Programs. I often present at local and regional workshops/conferences on the topic of early childhood curriculum and the importance of play.

I am excited to serve on the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel so I can put my experience to use impacting the lives of children and families in the state of Kansas.
I am the executive director of Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas. After spending twelve years operating a licensed and nationally accredited family child care facility, I had the opportunity to transition to a position with the child care resource and referral agency (then ERC Resource & Referral, Inc., and now doing business as Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas). I love working directly with child care providers, center-based teachers and center directors, offering technical assistance and teaching professional development sessions. I moved into the role of Executive Director in 2006, and celebrated 20 years with the agency last October.

I am committed to supporting policies and practices that offer every child a healthy, safe and appropriate early learning experience regardless of the type of setting. I believe that parents and families deserve support and the ability to make choices that are right for their child and family. I value collaborative work and see the power of collective impact, understanding the benefits of working in tandem and partnership with others. I am a parent and grandparent, and strongly believe that the decisions we make today will have a lasting impact on the strength and well-being of our communities, the state of Kansas and our nation in the years to come.

I saw the opportunity to serve on the Kansas Early Childhood Recommendations Panel as a chance to add my voice and perspective to the important work taking place in our state supporting the early childhood field, and am honored to have this opportunity.

My personal interests include spending time with my husband and family in our beautiful back yard, reading, and taking in the beautiful Kansas scenery from the back of a Harley!