

KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD RECOMMENDATIONS PANEL

Monthly Meeting Minutes
Friday, February 19, 2021



Visit the [Children's Cabinet website](#) for meeting materials and the [YouTube recording](#).

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

Tanya Bulluck, Child Start, Inc.

Gail Cozadd, Kansas Children's Service League

Rachele FioRito, United Way of the Plain

Jenny Flinders, University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research

Kelly Frantz-Langford, TARC, Inc.

Amy Gottschamer, Googols of Learning

Kim Hawkins, USD 233 Olathe Public Schools

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

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

Amy Meek, Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund

Paula Neth, The Family Conservancy

Patty Peschel, Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities, Inc.

Amanda Petersen, Kansas State Department of Education

Dee Rankin, Child Start, Inc.

Angie Saenger, Child Care Aware of Kansas

Jan Scheideman, Riley 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

Minutes

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.

Meeting Agenda

Kim Kennedy moved to approve the agenda and Reva Wywadis seconded, with a unanimous vote to approve the agenda as presented.

January 15, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Patty Peschel moved to approve the January minutes and Amy Meek seconded, with a unanimous vote to approve the January minutes as presented.

Kansans' Open Forum - Written and Verbal Comments:

Brenda Bandy from the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition shared key concepts about breastfeeding and early childhood (see attached written comments):

- 90% of families in Kansas choose to breastfeed.
- The early childhood field can build systems, policies, and environments to support the decision to breastfeed.
- Breastfeeding plays an important role in early childhood development.
- The Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition mapped every strategy from the *All In for Kansas Kids Strategic Plan* to show what is currently being done, or what could be done to further integrate breastfeeding.

The Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition will present at the February 24th Early Childhood Systems Building Webinar.

Follow-up from previous meetings - Debbie Deere

Debbie Deere provided an update on the various workgroups meeting.

Strategies for Engaging Providers

Workgroup formed in December following Panel discussions on this topic. Started with conversations around what the priorities for this group will be. Focusing on connecting with child care providers to establish relationships. The group decided to ask providers the question, "What do you want this group to know?" and hope to have this question to child care provider groups throughout the early childhood network for feedback.

#KSBeatsTheVirus

Shared videos created with help from Marites Altuna. There is a Spanish version as well. These are live and available to share out as much as possible.

- [#KSBeatsTheVirus video link - English](#)
- [#KSBeatsTheVirus video link - Spanish](#)

The group also created a [Facebook profile picture frame](#) available to use. Those interested can go to Facebook and create the profile picture frame for their profile.

January Meeting Recap

Discussed priorities for the Panel in 2021, including:

- This group said they wanted to work, rather than hearing presentations during meetings.
- The Panel has been helpful in making connections with others in early childhood field at local and state levels.
- Joined to “bridge the gap” between systems work and providers. Seeing progress being made on this.
- The virtual format of the meetings is helpful for members who live a long distance to participate more easily.

[Kindergarten Transitions Memorandum of Understanding Toolkit Dissemination Plan/Documents](#)

Peggy Kelly shared information regarding the resources/tools to Kindergarten Transitions Workgroup have created. The group created a one-page document to give a visual of why kindergarten transition matters.

- Came up with five categories: Family, Child, School, Community, Early Learning
- List strengths and reasons why kindergarten transition would be helpful to a community.
- Hope this will be eye-catching and direct people to the Memorandum of Understanding document.

Thanked Amy Gottschamer for creating document. Point is to create local team in your community.

Mallory Arellano spoke about the Google Form Questionnaire she created for the toolkit. This form should be able to show all the areas represented, and identify any gaps. The form will help with the dissemination of the toolkit.

[Kansas Power of the Positive](#)

Gail Cozadd shared a request from the [Kansas Power of the Positive](#) coalition regarding family friendly workplaces. The coalition is working to identify three specific employers to conduct the Kansas Power of the Positive employee survey for grant years ending 2021

and 2022. Target areas are Kansas City, Topeka, Wichita, Hays, Pittsburg, and Salina. The survey is approximately 19 questions, and online. Panel members can support this request by sharing ideas for employers that may be interested in participating with Debbie Deere at ddeere@ksde.org and Vicky Roper at vroper@kcsli.org.

Family Engagement

Heather Smith, System of Supports Director for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment Bureau of Family Health, provided a brief overview of efforts to strengthen family engagement at a statewide level, and an upcoming opportunity for Panel members.

- Wanted to focus on alignment across state agencies to ensure family voice is central to what is done across systems. Create synergy and alignment so families feel connected as well.
- See how work can be pulled together to support a strong strategic approach.
- Family engagement is a critical part of the *All In for Kansas Kids* strategic plan and the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five.
- Primary goals of coordinated family engagement efforts are:
 - Increased alignment across state agencies
 - Ensure family voice throughout Kansas' early childhood care and education system
 - Evaluating and increasing representation and equity
- The Kansas Department of Health and Environment will lead the development of a family engagement toolkit.
- There are volunteer opportunities to be in a workgroup to help create the toolkit, and to review and provide feedback.

Reach out to Heather Smith to learn more heather.smith@ks.gov or Debbie Deere to get involved in workgroup. Potentially bring back to the Panel in future conversations.

All In For Kansas Kids Needs Assessment Update

Sara Gardner, University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research, provided an update on the [statewide early childhood needs assessment](#) first completed in 2019. Kansas will annually update this needs assessment as part of the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five.

- The first update will focus on three key areas:
 - How did COVID-19 impact the lives of children and families in Kansas?
 - How did COVID-19 impact our system?
 - What lessons did we learn trying to implement the strategies, tactics, and goals in the *All In for Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan?

Ask of Panel – Help gather any formal or informal information from the past year that could inform the Needs Assessment update. Please go back to respective agencies and

organizations to share this request. You can send information to Sara Gardner (sgardner10@ku.edu) or Debbie Deere (ddeere@ksde.org), or use the [Children's Cabinet Share Your Thoughts webpage](#). We are hoping to have this gathered by the end of February if possible.

Child Care Development Fund Feedback Session

Sara Gardner opened the Child Care Development Fund Feedback Session. The Child Care Development Fund is federal funding that helps low-income families access child care through child care assistance programs, as well as enhances the quality of child care for all children.

- The Child Care Development Fund is administered through the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF).
- Every 3 years states are required to send a new state plan to federal partners.
 - This state plan is a means to an end – a plan that brings support to strengthen the child care system in Kansas. Part of ongoing conversation to better understand child care needs in the state.
- The Kansas Department for Children and Families is working closely with other early childhood care and education partners to gather information, seek new opportunities, and align with the *All In for Kansas Kids* Strategic Plan.

The Panel participated in a facilitated conversation around Sections 6 and 7 of the plan, and were invited and encouraged to give as much feedback on the plan as possible. The ask is for Panel members to engage with stakeholders, families, providers, and advocates to their input as well. Kansans can visit the [Children's Cabinet Child Care Development Plan webpage](#) to share input.

Facilitators Mary Baskett and Janine Hron began the conversation with Section 6 of the draft plan on Workforce Recruitment and Retention. They asked Panel members to share comments and input around federal requirements of a cohesive statewide plan to recruit and retain a qualified and effective child care workforce.

Opened discussion with questions: What's going well? What barriers and challenges do we have? What is no longer needed? What could be possible to change via a successful 3-year plan? Panel members presented their feedback:

- In terms of professional development – providers can get that in a format that works best for them. For family child care providers who are already working long days, this is an area we can do better, and find a system to support early child care providers.
- In terms of what is going well – this is a wide-open job market. There is also an issue with competing job and work conditions. Now that we are dealing in the pandemic with people remotely – people are looking for more remote opportunities. Shift in employment field that will impact early childhood. Ongoing effort to bring in

additional investment into funding system. Increasing investment wealth – business, government, local community. Engaging the Kansas Department of Commerce. Bring in more resources to support the system.

- Strength – Interacting with early childhood providers, they are amazing, they have the knowledge to help children in the early years. Challenges & barriers noticed in western Kansas – a lot of people leave because of child care options. It is so hard for families who do not have resources to dig, find, and talk to people. Increase this knowledge for everyone.
- Challenge – a lot of providers have gone through teacher education programs, and have great knowledge. These providers have then transferred to work in school districts.
- Positive – pandemic has brought to front that early childhood is essential.
- Doing fantastic with professional development. One thing that did stick out – Workforce Alliance – this piece is missing. They are very underutilized (by the early childhood care and education sector). When people go through trainings and extensive programs, they are searching for child care for these families and paying for it. Partnered to promote openings at child care centers. Take child care providers and do mock interviews for them. All of this is free. They are big advocates for early childhood. When talking about this, this should be something we are more intentional about and add to the plan.
- As a provider, there is an amazing effort to support providers through COVID-19. There has been a very concerted effort to make sure providers have access to online trainings. Listen to providers who have been around for a while, and utilize this expertise in the field to act as mentors and guides for how to strengthen the field. Cohorts through Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities – feel like a lifeline. As we adjust to our new normal, make sure we still have this network to support each other.
- From parent perspective – We need more providers that will work with special needs families and have training for them. We can help them work with infant toddler programs to help provide for these children and their families. There is not a lot and families struggle to find child care. It is expensive. Work on helping providers be comfortable with having children with special healthcare needs.
- We have an aging workforce. Reach into high schools. Get internships. Suggestion would be bringing back teaching wages, educational stipend, and support to help them pay and reward them once they have accomplished those. Benefits – In New Mexico – they are working on a way to get early childhood providers incorporated in retirement plan.
- COVID burnout from providers – can we keep providers around a few more years in a system that needs the support.
- Strength – Professional Development. Struggles – we have many grants from the state to train and enhance, but then we end up training, and then they move on to a school district. Investing in people, but then they move on to get more money and opportunity. We can't fill vacancies, and finding qualified workers is really hard.

Without having qualified workforce, we can't do the work that we do. It is difficult for our teachers to qualify for loan forgiveness because of their credentials. Maybe the state could look at this to keep bachelor-level workers.

- Nice models out there working with high school students to get a Child Development Associate, and when they graduate they are able to move into child care positions. There are open positions, but no one is applying. COVID-19 has also been a risk. We need to get on top of recruitment piece. Last three years – salary supplement program – they get one salary supplement in December and the second in June. We found we are able to retain 95% of teachers by participating in the program. We help cover cost through scholarships. We need to figure ways to support both ways.
- Consider having a list of providers or organizations that could provide training for special needs available for centers. Also, where do we send information if there are free training about special needs?
- As we manage our Head Start programs – care for young children is much more expensive than 4- and 5-year-olds. School districts are really working on Pre-K population. Hard to balance that cost to stay in business to support 0-3-year-olds.
- We have seen workforce step up in ways we never thought we would. Support the workforce in the mental health aspect. Self-care they need. Try to incorporate system for everyone to take care of workforce.
- Thinking and planning from a mixed delivery system perspective is very important to have a plan that truly works in Kansas.
- The need for workforce recruitment. Positive experience with community college in Kansas City, Kansas and high schools. Having them as interns is valuable. Plug-in for work to be done with these partnerships. Teachers anticipate salary supplements.
- To hear parents speak of need for knowledgeable providers to support special health care needs. Children benefit the best when they are integrated with their peers. How do we support families and their providers?
- We need to do what we can so providers do not get burnt out. We need to be able to ask questions and share that we are there for each other to help.
- It would be beneficial to ensure that all providers have access to the Wi-Fi, technology equipment, and training to use/access/engage in our current virtual world.
- The University of Kansas facilitates a program called Resilience Alliance focused on the entire Child Welfare workforce. While it isn't specific to recruitment, it is great to help the sustain the workforce and how use the resilience lens in the workplace.
- Having the ability to refer staff to an Employee Assistance Program for additional support this past year and knowing staff have benefits to seek the services they need for health and/or mental health concerns has been invaluable. I don't know how other programs do without. Health benefits are essential.

The facilitators asked the Panel to look down the 3-year plan, and indicate what they would be most excited to see?

- A situation where we set goals and we have good strong collaboration where we are sharing ideas. The people doing the work with our children feel empowered and respected.
- Elevating self-care supports and overall health for the current provider population to help with retention.
- The low wage situation is a main driver in the early learning workforce profession. Implementing wage supports will be a huge stabilizing factor and success.
- We could be supporting development of child care providers – working with state agencies – using systems to utilize more efficiently college information from early childhood providers.
- Increasing reimbursement so that we can increase pay for providers.
- We also need to factor in the need for benefits (health insurance, paid leave, retirement, Employee Assistance Program) along with increased wages.
- Looking toward school districts as two-way reciprocal partnerships particularly as we look at supporting children with special needs.

The facilitators shifted the conversation to Section 7 of the draft plan on Continuous Quality Improvement. This section focuses on supporting continuous quality improvement to address state-specific needs and increase family choice.

Opened discussion with questions: What’s going well? What barriers and challenges do we have? What is no longer needed? What could be possible to change via a successful 3-year plan? Panel members presented their feedback:

- Strength – Links to Quality – where the process is at and the work they were able to do with the pilot, and pairing with the pandemic has put a spotlight. Challenge side – people in child care are working long hours, when do you have time to do those things? Continue to grow Links to Quality in the next three years.
- Making sure as we take steps forward, continuing conversations with the providers. Decisions sometimes feel they are made to the field not with the field. Making sure as we implement plans, the goal is systems improvement, but we are reaching out to have these conversations with the providers.
- Professional memberships – there are many great organizations that can provide to a community, but they are not utilized as much as they could be. Many providers not a part of these organizations and are missing the benefits. If there could be a way to elevate the importance of participating.
- One of our bright spots is that no one knows what to do with a dollar more than our early childhood folks. There is also such a need for infant-toddler care. If additional resources could be directed to providing specific support to opening more infant-toddler spots. Another challenge – What providers really need falls in with the capital improvement category, but they are excluded in funding opportunities.
- Parents are desperate for care, and there are not the spots. Get parent education out and help providers tell parents why they cannot take their children. It’s difficult

to bring in additional staff because it could take months to leave that person alone with the child. Sustainable ways of bringing in staff and paying staff.

- Adding more providers who are willing to accept Department for Children and Families subsidy. So hard for families who are experiencing challenges to feel like they are against the system. They finally get emergency assistance, yet can't find a high-quality provider.
- Basing subsidy on enrollment, rather than attendance, would make it more appealing to providers.
 - Noted in the chat bar: "Department for Children and Families subsidy has implemented determining the benefit amounts based on blocks of time that are defined more in the working draft of this state plan in section 4.3.1. This implementation has not happened completely for existing subsidy cases, as they are being updated when their review is processed, but it is being done for new cases. DCF expects to have this fully implemented by 10/21 for all existing subsidy cases."
- We need to, as the bigger organizations, find smaller ones to give them the supports to provide to their local providers. We need to make sure we are establishing lots of new partnerships to continue to grow.
- On the topic of Quality. I realize there is discussion about the revamping of the Kansas/Missouri Early Childhood Competencies and I would like to see an emphasis on aligning it with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)'s Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators document. (Part of their new Unifying Framework).
- Bringing in illegal child care providers into the system. Substitute pipelines, especially during the pandemic to still maintain child care.
- It would be nice to have a substitute network of who a provider can call.
- Interest in elevating quality in anti-bias education. More training, more financial incentives, part of a credential, etc. Pushing out the importance of an anti-bias education, not just focusing on racism, but all inequities, and ways people can be marginalized. If we can start this at the youngest level, and give them the foundational skills, we can raise a new generation of equitable thinking little folks.
- I think it is important to evaluate whether or not Links to Quality is improving access to and use of higher quality care by various subgroups of children (immigrant families, dual language learners, children of color), etc.? And is the system assisting providers in providing competent services to these children?

Following the conclusion of the input session, Amanda Petersen thanked Panel members for a thoughtful, engaged discussion and noted the value of having the Panel as a resource to provide this kind of feedback and strengthen our Kansas early childhood system.

Requests for Future Agenda Items

It was requested that in a future meeting this group could take a deeper look at the [National Association for the Education of Young Children's Power to the Profession initiative](#). Amy Gottschamer can share background information for Panel members to review with Debbie Deere.

Bright Spots

- Kelli Mark noted that the Bureau of Family Health is recruiting for three open home visiting positions and requested that Panel members share these postings with potential candidates.
- Peggy Kelly shared the upcoming Kansas Early Learning Day at the Capitol Virtual Town Hall on Wednesday, February 24, 2021. Registration is free.
- Kelli Mark requested that follow-up information from Panel meetings includes a clear list of action items, including sample email messages Panel members can send when they are asked to reach out to other partners, to make follow-up action items easy, actionable and efficient.

Upcoming Meetings (all via Zoom)

- Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund Meeting – Friday, April 9, 9:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m.
- Early Childhood Stakeholders Group Meeting – Friday, April 9, 1:30-3:00 p.m.
- Early Childhood Recommendations Panel meeting – Friday, March 19, 9:00-11:30 a.m.
 - Third Fridays of the month, beginning at 9:00 a.m.
- Scheduled workgroup meetings will be posted on the [Panel Meetings webpage](#) of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund website (kschildrenscabinet.org)

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.