

KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD RECOMMENDATIONS PANEL

Monthly Meeting Minutes
Friday, March 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

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

Peggy Kelly, Kansas Head Start Association

Kim Kennedy, Kansas Department for Children and Families

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.

Sarah Rivers, Via Christi Rehabilitation

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

Gail Cozadd moved to approve the agenda and Cornelia Stevens seconded, with a unanimous vote to approve the agenda as presented.

February 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Amy Meek moved to approve the February minutes and Reva Wywadis seconded, with a unanimous vote to approve the February minutes as presented.

Kansans' Open Forum - Written and Verbal Comments:

No comments submitted.

Follow-up from previous meetings - Debbie Deere

Debbie Deere provided an update on the various workgroups meeting:

Strategies for Engaging Providers

Emily Barnes presented a report out to the panel regarding the February Engaging Providers Workgroup meeting. Came into the meeting with a task to figure out how to reach providers and ask, "What do you want this group to look like?" Opened conversation with introductions, and defined the purpose of the group. Focused on the meaning of engagement. Feedback received from the group:

- Alphabet soup of acronyms can be difficult to learn, and it can be confusing to keep straight who is who.
- Presenting information in a way that is understandable is essential to meaningful engagement.
- One idea is to create a "web" visual showing how agencies are related and which agency is responsible for what, in clear language.
- Providers sometimes feel they are too new to share feedback. Agencies/others should make sure providers understand that regardless of where they are in their experience, constructive feedback is helpful and useful.
- Training for more experienced providers. Making sure there are new topics.
- Burnout. Addressing provider fatigue.

- What key players should the Panel consider in the Engaging Providers Workgroup? Are we reaching out to all of the entities?
- One of the ideas brought up was the concept of bringing a panel of providers to the Recommendations Panel for a future discussion.

Panel members provided questions, comments, and reactions to the points Emily addressed. Possible resources include:

- List of acronyms
 - Family Advisory Council has a list, with an emphasis on special health care needs
 - State Interagency Coordinating Council has a list
- Visual, or map, showing early childhood system.
 - May take the form of a web or family tree
 - A hierarchy, from the Governor down to the individual child care provider
 - "Pillars of support", with each agency as a pillar
- A Frequently Asked Questions document to address questions like, "Where can a family access tuition support?" Noted that this information may vary by community.

February Meeting Recap

Spent the majority of time on the Child Care Development Fund State Plan facilitated discussions on Section 6 - Workforce Recruitment and Retention and Section 7 - Continuous Quality Improvement. Asked What is going well/Barriers and challenges/What is no longer needed/Possible changes for a successful 3-year plan/Most excited to see. The Panel's feedback serves as a valuable resource in strengthening the Kansas early childhood system.

Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition

Brenda Bandy, Co-Executive Director of the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition, gave a brief overview on the presentation at the February 24 Early Childhood Systems Building Webinar. Some of the key points included:

- Breastfeeding is foundational to the continuum of early childhood.
- In Kansas breastfeeding is the norm. 72% reported breastfeeding for at least 8 weeks.
- 90% of families do some breastfeeding from the very beginning.
- Try to support this behavior, in a culture and system that is often not in alignment with this behavior. The Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition is about removing the barriers across the system wherever they exist.
- Understand that the child care provider needs to have the deep understanding of how to support breastfeeding, not to convince a family to breastfeed.

- A cultural shift may be needed to change norms and perceptions in the child care environment to support mothers in their effort to provide human milk.
- Educated over 4,600 child care providers with the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition course.
- Recognize that child care providers are small businesses, and many of the tools the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition has created for businesses apply to child care providers.
- There is a technical piece and individual support piece. Technical - how do we handle the breastfed infant in care and Support - family engagement, family knowledge, and connecting to resources.

Brenda opened up conversation with the Panel to think about a personal breastfeeding experience, and how that experience could have been improved with support. Panel members noted that some personal experiences occurred many years ago, so some of these circumstances may be different now. Personal experiences included:

- Breastfeeding in public in church. No lactation room - breastfed in the pew with a cover, and it was very uncomfortable. Lactation room or child's room would have been very helpful. Depended on Stormont Vail Breastfeeding Clinic - helped to have other moms around and have a place to go. Was not referred, but found clinic because that was where the baby was delivered. No one provided the resource. One thing wished was done at the clinic was screening of Post-Partum Depression and provide information about breastfeeding considerations when taking medication to treat mental health challenges.
- Obstetrician never talked about breastfeeding, so first experience was in the hospital with lactation consultant. Need to talk about how to manage expectations for how simple or challenging breastfeeding may be. While the lactation support was helpful - there wasn't any strategies for how to cope. Support could have been improved with child care provider to handle when milk supply had run out. That was a stressful situation and the conversation could have gone differently.
- Stress the importance of communication skills, followed by compassion, and strategies.
- Culture piece - Mother never breastfed, and didn't have knowledge of what you produce as a mom, and from formula. Didn't have support to keep going.
- Overall good support, but had to seek out resources. Was difficult to get into the breastfeeding clinic, because lack of child care while attending the clinic. Supported a lot of moms who wanted to breastfeed, but their children were struggling. Thinking about families who don't have the ability to seek out support, make sure those resources are an option.
- Some people feel shame for not being able to continue breastfeeding - important to provide them with support and compassion as well.

- It would be really helpful to have more resources for rural communities. Technology is a silver lining. Tele-health options.

Brenda asked the Panel what ideas and suggestions they may have for the Children's Cabinet, and programs represented in the Panel to support breastfeeding through those agencies. Suggestions Included:

- There is an inequity in how moms can access technical support for breastfeeding. Challenges in early weeks can snowball going forward. If you can't access the right people early on, or if you have to pay for support, it can put you on a different track.
- Child care providers may see a family who intends to breastfeed at an initial interview, and then by the time they enroll in the child care program several months later
- Timing is crucial. Messaging is important. Trainings that exist provide a well-rounded picture for providers.
- Some success will lie in validating the experience of the provider, many of whom come from a generation when breastfeeding was much less common. Trainings and support should support hurt and shame from not having same information when they had children of their own.
- Need to address that there are legitimately bad experiences and pain.
- Observation from program perspective - how many programs have logistical issues? Set-ups not ideal, might need funding for some basic construction to allow the creation of a semi-private space for breastfeeding.
- Some things are technical solutions over adaptive.
- Wondering what role child care health consultants can play? Might be an opportunity and resource for providers.
- Educating staff. Infuse the knowledge and information into our system, find opportunities for professional organizations to share with peers as a group rather than individuals in a training. Any time we can approach providers when they are part of a group of peers, it might allow people to listen from a getting information perspective, when a one-on-one could bring up defenses.

Unheard Voices in Our Tomorrows Story bank

Melissa Rooker, Executive Director of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, opened the conversation. Melissa noted that the Panel can bring projects to the attention of either the Children's Cabinet or another state agency or organization. The Kindergarten Transitions work is an example of a project that began in this way. The Children's Cabinet or state agencies can also bring asks to the Panel. Today's work is Melissa, on behalf of the Children's Cabinet, requesting that the Panel engage in work related in the Cabinet's

commitment to equity, and the federal work of the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five.

Jenny Flinders, Research Project Manager at the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research, shared that the mission of the Our Tomorrows work is to use lived experiences to shape real-time, anticipatory policy and programming decisions at the local, state, and nationwide levels to make our tomorrows brighter. The project is a story collection tool, using a process called sensemaking, that creates a statewide story bank. Community Action Labs have also been rolled out. Our Tomorrows does the following:

- Explore Stories about real-life challenges, bright spots, and resiliency
- Lift Up parent voice and parent choice
- Pinpoint Needs by identifying gaps and elevating what's working best
- Enact Systems Change by using stories to inform policies and programs

Jenny provided an example of what the Our Tomorrows data analysis showed in regard to the Technology For Families and Remote Learning Grants, in that 13.7% of respondents experienced a lack of access to technology and/or internet as a primary disruptor. Families experiencing this disruptor were more likely to be from marginalized racial identities, and have annual household incomes under \$30,000. Families that were served by these programs who shared stories in the Our Tomorrows Story Bank were more likely to identify as being non-White, low-income, unemployed, single parents, and/or considered COVID-essential. The stories shared by these families also showed thematic patterns of community help and pride, high rates of positive family outcomes, and a recognition of family strength.

How can the Panel help elevate, expand and increase the voices we are hearing in the bank, and particularly the voices that may be more unheard in the state? Diverse representation in the Story Bank means that decisions are made based on patterns of experiences, "outlier" or emerging signals from these experiences, and community-based sensemaking of these experiences.

Who are we hearing from? 2,432 stories shared between March 27, 2020 and March 18, 2021.

- 74.6% - Identified as female
- 24.1% - Identified as non-White
- 9.7% - Reported an annual family income under \$20,000
- 7.4% - Identified as single parents
- 7.3% - Aged 65 and older
- 48.6% - reported being COVID-essential workers

Respondents were asked to share, which of the following best represents you?

- 28.6% - Working class families or individuals
- 3.9% - Those with special healthcare needs
- 7.4% - Single parents
- 0.6% - Once or currently incarcerated individuals
- 4.5% - Those who struggle with mental health
- 1.8% - Immigrants and/or those who speak a home language other than English
- 6.4% - Those from remote or rural communities
- 18.4% - Service providers
- 1.9% - Those with marginalized racial, gender, and/or sexual orientation identities
- 9.3% - Other voices that need to be heard

Jenny asked the Panel to consider the following questions: What does it mean to be a Kansas family? What "unheard voices" are we missing? What can you do to help increase and elevate unheard voices in our Tomorrows Story Bank? Discussion included:

- Non-English-speaking families are not widely-heard. Making sure to reach out to families in their native languages to make sure those voices are heard.
 - The survey is available in Spanish, and respondents can share responses in Spanish. The Our Tomorrows team has the ability to translate into other languages on request
- Might consider survey stands in grocery stores serving specific populations, churches. Broaden thinking for where to engage.
- Can create QR codes for scanning and completing surveys.
- Have people go out into networks to encourage networks to share stories.
- Connect your communities and organizations to sensemaking and citizen journalist opportunities.
- Good ways to incentivize collection. Some places have had a gift basket. Give opportunities when having a captive audience to help collect stories.

The ask of the Panel is for members to go back to respective organizations/agencies and brainstorm how members/organizations/agencies can help engage Kansans in sharing Our Tomorrows stories, particularly Kansans who may identify as "unheard voices." Panel members will share back actions taken next month.

[Kansas COVID-19 Reflections](#)

Amanda Petersen opened a conversation to reflect on COVID-19 to inform next steps in the state COVID-19 response. The [September Panel minutes](#) and [December Panel minutes](#) include details from previous Panel conversations on this topic.

Kansas Department of Health and Environment Child Care Licensing Temporary Closures:

Lori Kravitz, Early Care and Youth Programs Director, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, shared data related to temporary closures of licensed child care facilities. From the beginning of the pandemic, child care providers have reported temporary closures and reopened statuses through surveys available on the Kansas Department of Health and Environment Child Care Licensing webpage. On average there were no more than 16% of total licensed facilities reporting closure at any period of time. Some closures were not due to specific closure or positive test results, but rather an overall concern for the health of self, family, or staff. Many providers reported reopening after a short closure period.

Vaccine Update:

Lori Kravitz reminded Panel members that vaccine information is available at www.kansasvaccine.gov, with [weekly updates posted under "Availability"](#). Child care workers were included in Phase 2. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment provided local health departments with a list of child care facilities by county. Child care workers should contact their local health department if they have not received information and want the vaccine. Preschool program staff working in school-based programs were vaccinated with the K-12 vaccine rollout. If anyone was missed, they should contact their local school administrator or local health department.

Vaccine status and hesitancy from the Our Tomorrows Story Bank

Jenny Flinders shared that the Our Tomorrows team added a question this year to the Our Tomorrows survey asking participants about their vaccination status. The following data is current as of March 15, 2021:

- 21.2% of responses - I do not plan to get vaccinated
- 42.4% of responses - I am not vaccinated but plan to get it
- 36.4% of responses - I have been vaccinated

Wanted to share what we are learning from shared experiences of those who said they did not plan to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Of those respondents who said they did not plan to get the COVID-19 vaccine:

- 42.9% were between the ages of 45 and 64
- 71.4% said they were considered essential workers
- 35.7% have annual family incomes between \$40,000-\$59,999
- 35.7% live in "frontier" counties

Most of the stories don't mention the vaccination at all. Want to highlight this means those who may be hesitant about vaccination are experiencing challenges that may be addressed by vaccination.

Conversation about the Kansas COVID-19 Response

Amanda Petersen asked the Panel for big-picture reflections on the COVID-19 pandemic. What do we know so far, and what do we still need to learn?:

- At my program, about 50% of employees so far have received first dose of vaccine. Will there be updated health and safety guidance of how policies/practices may change for providers as the majority of people have their vaccines?
 - The Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention shared [updated guidance for operating child care programs during COVID-19](#), and [updated guidance for operating schools](#). The Kansas Department of Health and Environment is reviewing to update Kansas guidance ([see Kansas guidance here](#)).
- Federal relief funding will be coming into the state. We have an opportunity to think about these new dollars. Is there a need or opportunity for the Panel to consider this?
 - On the Kansas State Department of Education side, working with districts to figure out what to do with the second round of federal relief funding, but have not yet received guidance for the third round (the American Relief Plan). It's been helpful to refer back to Panel meeting minutes from COVID-19 reflections as one piece of feedback from stakeholders over the last year.
 - State agencies have contracted with the Boston Consulting Group to support planning. The Kansas Department for Children and Families is working with Boston Consulting group to consider federal relief for child care - considering information gathered from the 2019 Needs Assessment and surveys. [Kansas stakeholders can share input regarding how Kansas should use additional federal child care dollars to meet needs due to the pandemic using this form](#). Working on short-term items that can get out of the door, like stabilization fund payments and subsidy changes through the [Kansas Hero Relief Program](#). Should have a finalized list of some of the major ideas by April 5.
- Angie Saenger, Child Care Aware of Kansas Deputy Director, shared information on child care health consultants and Child Care Impact Grants. **Panel members can help share this information with child care providers:**
 - **Child Care Impact Grants are NOW Available!** The Child Care Impact Grants program is intended to provide financial support for eligible child care programs to address facility and other demonstrated needs related to COVID-19 mitigation, health and safety. Funds may be used for the following purposes:
 - Minor Renovations - For home or facility space(s) that are designated for the provision of child care services. Must

clearly support the child care program in meeting health and safety guidelines, mitigating COVID-19 and/or meeting the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101, et seq.).

- Other Activities/Expenses - May be considered if determined necessary to restart or continue operations safely and are not covered by other funding sources.
- Additional information and grant application details are available at <https://ks.childcareaware.org/grants/>
- **Child Care Health Consultations - Help Child Care Providers Get Connected!** High-quality Child Care Health Consultations are available to help child care providers identify ways to support health, safety and wellness in the program. Providers will receive consultation services from an assigned consultant in their public health region. The role of the Child Care Health Consultant is to promote the health and development of children, families and staff and to ensure a healthy and safe child care environment. Additional information and the consultation request process are available at <https://ks.childcareaware.org/health-consultant-network/>

How can Panel members support the Kansas COVID-19 response?

- Promoting information about new resources to support early childhood care and education providers and families.
- Part C referrals are down across the state. That means many children and families who would have been identified if not for the pandemic are not getting services.
 - It is important to ensure providers have information of what Part C does and that supports are in place for these children.
 - This may be a unique moment to recognize our collective experience and raise public awareness of ways to support development, screening, and working together to support learning and connect to supports.
- Wonder about ways to give voice to all the families who are struggling. Can we reframe "educational loss" to refocus on overall well-being instead of content knowledge? Perhaps federal funds can be used for public awareness campaigns, videos, and thinking outside the box for how these funds can be used.
- Panel members discussed the importance of self-care and mental health for early childhood professionals, who are both coping with the stress of the pandemic and working with children and families who have experienced trauma.

Requests for Future Agenda Items

No requests at this time.

Bright Spots

Panel members provided bright spots including:

- Commending the way the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment has handled vaccination for child care providers.
- At a recent meeting, Kansas Head Start directors started to talk for the first time about post-pandemic aspirations - turning our thoughts toward what we can we take forward. The horizon is getting closer!
- Emily Barnes was on a national panel at an event hosted by the Bipartisan Policy Center and did a fantastic job representing family child care.
- The Family Advisory Council has chosen Maternal Health to be the next workgroup in their expansion. Recruiting for that area of the council, and still looking for more members for the childhood group. These are great opportunities for family voice to shape early childhood decision-making in Kansas. [Please help recruit Family Advisory Council members - more information is available here!](#)
- There are a lot of openings right now at the Russell Child Development Center! See more information at [Careers | rcdc4kids](#)

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, April 16, 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 11:37 a.m.