

KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD RECOMMENDATIONS PANEL

Monthly Meeting Minutes
Friday, September 17, 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, Kansas Head Start Association

Mallory Arellano, Newman University

Marites Altuna, Kansas Deaf-Blind Project

Rachel Anno, Kansas Department for Children and Families

Emily Barnes, Barnes Child Care

Amanda Billings, Stepping Stones Academy

Gail Cozadd, Kansas Children's Service League

Kelly Davydov, Child Care Aware of Kansas

Jeremy Fite, Hilltop Child Development Center

Jennifer Forker, Hutchinson Community College

Jennifer Francois, Kansas Institute for Early Childhood Education and Research

Amy Gottschamer, Googols of Learning Child Development Center

Crystal Henry, The Family Conservancy

Sheila Hermocillo, USD 443 Dodge City

Callie Hoffman, Kansas Parents as Teachers Association

Kim Kennedy, Kansas Department for Children and Families

Esther Kottwitz, USD 497 Lawrence

David Lindeman, University of Kansas Life Span Institute at Parsons

Kelli Mark, Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Malissa Martin, Communities in Schools Mid-America

Natalie McClane, Kansas State Department of Education

Amy Meek, Kansas Children's Cabinet & Trust Fund

Lucas Neece, City of Lindsborg

Patty Peschel, Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities, Inc.

Amanda Petersen, Kansas State Department of Education

Rachele Rickard, United Way of the Plains

Dannah Schatz, Russell Child Development Center

Lisa Schmidt, Women's Community Y

Cassandra Sines, Parent Leader

Heather Staab, Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Cornelia Stevens, TOP Early Learning Centers

Jenny Welch Buller, University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research

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

Lucas Neese moved to approve the agenda and Natalie McClane seconded, with a unanimous vote to approve the agenda as presented.

August 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Marites Altuna moved to approve the August minutes and Jennifer Adhima seconded, with a unanimous vote to approve the July minutes as presented.

Kansans' Open Forum - Written and Verbal Comments:

No comments submitted.

1-800-CHILDREN discussion

Amanda Petersen reviewed the [draft 1-800-CHILDREN language for funding opportunities](#) with the Panel members, who shared the following feedback:

- Kansas Department of Health and Environment shared this as a requirement for Part C programs starting July 1. Appreciate having this more detailed "Quick Start" information available to incorporate into future funding opportunities.
- Panel members appreciate that the Kansas Children's Service League team has shared promotional materials to share with families. People can contact Kaitlyn Moore (kamoore@kcsl.org) to request window clings, other informational materials. The team is eager to share these promotional materials and appreciates support in sharing them with families!
- Panel members can visit 1800childrenks.org and search by zip code to review what resources and programs are currently listed in their area. If they notice resources that are missing, Panel members can contact local service providers to help them understand how to add their services/resources to the directory.
- The Panel discussed that the draft language can more clearly explain what types of providers/organizations are expected to enter information into 1-800-CHILDREN.
 - In particular, the 1-800-CHILDREN resource directory does not replace the child care resource and referral services provided by Child Care Aware of Kansas and local child care resource and referral agencies. Child Care Aware of Kansas is listed in the database, and 1-800-CHILDREN staff refer people

who call for support in finding child care to Child Care Aware so that they can access that up-to-date information and those consumer education services.

- Panel members suggested incorporating language to explain that licensed child care providers are exempt from the requirement to enter information about services provided into the 1-800-CHILDREN database and describe how they can still support 1-800-CHILDREN

Amanda Petersen informed the group that KSDE will keep working on this language with partners for the Early Childhood Block Grant/Kansas Preschool Pilot RFPs (Request For Proposals), to be shared in the future. When finalized, it will be posted to today's meeting materials, and disseminated as needed.

Links To Quality (L2Q)

Megan Smith, L2Q Development Specialist, Kansas Department for Children and Families, gave an overview of the [Links To Quality](#) links that are currently being used, as well as needs for additional links.

- Links To Quality is the Kansas quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). Led by the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF).
- QRIS defines quality and provides a framework for helping programs and providers meet that standard.
- The Kansas system focuses on a recognition system, rather than rating quality.
- L2Q wants to serve as a partner to licensed child care providers in supporting their needs.
- Work to build upon strengths of the providers, by working with the competencies of: program administration, family partnerships, learning and development, and health and safety. These create the L2Q standards of quality.
- Use a "badging" system to better recognize a program's commitment to quality and progress.
- A statewide network of programs is in place to ensure that all Kansas children have access to high-quality early care and education.
- The L2Q mission is to: increase quality, empower families, and strengthen communities.
- Components of L2Q: Programs (home and center-based child care), Learning Communities, Community Consultants, Links (quality standards in key areas), and Evidence Submission (portfolio system). Also researching the addition of Head Start Programs to be added to the programs component.
- L2Q started a Quality Pilot Program throughout 5 learning communities in Kansas from April 2018-May 2020. These were selected based on high childhood poverty, high unemployment, and high out-of-home placements.

- Following the pilot, moved into a transition phase with 32 programs who agreed to continue informing and providing feedback to continue the L2Q process.
- Links are program quality standards to compliment the work that providers are doing.
- Links contain quality indicators, benchmarks, evidence/guidance, and criteria for completing these requirements.
- Pilot foundation links were: program leadership, family partnerships, and learning & development.
- Based on research, pilot links have been revised to: Program Administration, Family Partnerships, Learning & Development.
- L2Q has a state level implementation team, and workgroups in place.
- A goal is to develop a new Link Development work group.
- The Learning & Development link planning will begin soon.
- A new link, Health & Safety, is being developed with 2 primary focuses: nutrition/food service/physical activity, and risk management/emergency preparedness.
- Links are aligned with national groups alignment standards.

A feedback session with the Panel addressed the following:

- **Goals for the Health & Safety Link feedback:**
 - Speaking as a parent, hard to know what you are looking at. Information available at KDHE, but still hard to know what that means. Am I going to know when I look at the L2Q ratings if a program is above average/below average/etc.?
 - A big part of the L2Q work is to work on parent, provider, and community education, as part of their strategic plan. We look at what are the essential pieces to be shared with each of these demographics?
- **Are there any additional assessment tools or standards that can be used to develop this new link?**
 - Is the cleanliness of a facility included in this?
 - Once the programs are meeting the KDHE standards, L2Q looks at how it can take those standards to the next step up?
 - With regards to the assessments, what does that look like in a practical sense? Are you going to write a best practices handbook for providers so that each program can set their own goals?
 - L2Q looks at assessment as an alignment. We pull from national standards to get additional information/standards to include. We don't plan to go on-site to do assessments. We do plan on having resources available for programs to see where the alignment happens within the different indicators. How can programs

implement the practices that are best for their program? The Community Consultants can assist with this process.

- Would like to have a book with a checklist as a resource tool. If additional funding becomes available, could possibly consider using those monies to create this.
 - How would this system increase an individual's professional portfolio? As this expands, how do we get to use this on a resume? It isn't a degree, but is strong professional development with a time commitment. What language can providers use to communicate the completion of this?
 - An essential part of the implementation planning process is to get provider feedback, so that is for the providers and by the providers. This feedback is essential as this develops.
 - Important to solidify language to let providers know that every step they take to improve upon their knowledge and experiences is recognized. As the providers complete each link, an acknowledgement system is needed to recognize that.
 - Important that language comes from the field, not the other way around.
 - Can you explain the badge system? Is that something that a provider can put on their resume to show that accomplishment?
 - L2Q is trying to think through the communication around what does this system mean to providers and families.
 - When parents go to the KDHE online system to check survey results, can they also list the badges that have been earned through L2Q?
 - If a community is doing development, can we make sure that the language being used promotes the quality/professionalism in the early childhood industry. This needs to hold the same level of value as other industries to acknowledge real dedicated work.
 - Child Care Aware shares information with families who are researching care. This might be a good place to share the provider's achievements with L2Q in that data base.
- **Who are individuals that you think would be essential in helping develop this Health & Safety Link specifically?**
 - Individuals who serve on emergency preparedness teams through Child Care Aware.
 - KDHE Emergency Preparedness Program team would be a good resource to help with this.
 - Step It Up grant program through Child Care Aware curriculum. Use existing programs that are "tried and true".
 - A Child Care Resource & Referral network representative.
 - County health nurses.
 - County extension agents / Family & Consumer Science agents.

- Hopefully a part of the standards will include children with disabilities and parent handbook materials.
 - L2Q is trying to be intentional with including diversity/equity/inclusion in all of their work.
- Division of Early Childhood recommended practices would be a useful resource, specific to inclusion. A lot of supporting documents from this that can be helpful. Panel members can share these materials with the group.

Megan will plan to reach out to potential work group members by October. Please continue to share any additional comments/feedback to [Megan Smith](#) or [Rachel Anno](#).

Work Group Breakout Sessions

Three Panel Work Groups, focusing on Child Care Recruitment & Retention, Family Partnerships, and Quality & Environments, continued their discussions. Descriptions of these conversations, and recordings of these sessions can be found on [The Kansas Children's website](#).

Work Group Breakout Sessions – Reports

Following the breakout of the Work Groups, Panel members joined back together to provide reports from their meetings.

Child Care Recruitment & Retention

The Work Group recapped how the group documented challenges for child care recruitment and retention from the August discussion. Time was spent identifying long and short-term solutions to those challenges. Short term solutions were: toolkit or template from around the state to help calculate their quality of care to bring awareness at the local level of the overhead costs, public awareness of low wages as they compare to what parents pay for services, pay for workforce education. Long term solutions: could child care providers be included in the state retirement Kansas Public Employees Retirement System (KPERs) system, looking at other states as models for that, paid family leave for providers, expanding more public recognition for child care teachers, uniquely rural solutions of media pushes and public relations communications. Systemic solutions: increase subsidy pay rates to align with cost of quality care, leadership opportunities to include career pathways and wage increases, how to bring unlicensed providers into the licensing system and advocacy work with district attorney offices across the state to assist with that process. Amanda shared the [Kansas Office of Prosperity, Power Up and Go report](#) as a reference.

Family Partnerships

The work group conversation included how we can better connect with families as part of this process. Parent groups are meeting regularly and what the connection points are to engage with them. Input from families on different aspects of the All In for Kansas Kids plan is important. Family partnership is gathering and receiving input from them, “nothing about us without us”. It doesn’t involve just asking for input, but needs to be followed up with specific actions. What does family partnerships look like from a program design? It is about the relationships that agencies have with families. How do you define parent leadership? Coming up with some universal definitions and thoughts so that everyone is working from a similar script. Parent leadership is parents helping other parents, speaking one on one or on behalf of other parents, and what are parents most interested in and what they have time to get involved with. Areas of need were identified to work towards for recommendations to be considered: existing resources for professional development, standards around family partnership and how to encourage that, ensuring that parents are aware of opportunities to engage and how that is communicated, equity and expectations in being able to recognize that not all parents approach engagement the same, meeting parents where they are at and having reasonable expectations.

Quality & Environments

Jordan Christian made a presentation on the State and Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (SICC and LICC) that are in place by state statute and regulations. These councils address meeting the needs of families and children with special health care needs. Discussed a game plan moving forward to better connect these councils with local providers, to include family and center-based providers. Continue a dialogue to make these councils aware of the needs of providers, and so that more providers can be aware of local resources that are available to them for referrals. Work on making the availability of provider lists more accessible, so that these groups can access that information. Making meeting times more accommodating to allow for providers to attend.

Further conversation with the full panel regarding making the provider contact information took place. Panel members involved with agencies that monitor that work were asked to contact the group with additional information and feedback. Child Care Aware is licensed by KDHE and bound by privacy restrictions. They can only release that information to parents seeking child care. They are available to help disseminate information (flyers, etc.) to those providers for anyone who has things to share. Entities can contact KDHE directly to request that information and they make decisions on a case

by case basis. A request to share that information with local school districts was mentioned.

Requests for Future Agenda Items

No requests at this time.

Bright Spots

- A farewell and thanks to Panel members, Lori Kravitz and Christi Smith who are leaving, as well as Brea Cudney who is leaving the Children's Cabinet staff.
- The Lindsborg, KS new child care center presented their budget to the City Council and it was positively received. This budget would pay lead teacher \$18/hour and assistant teachers \$17/hour.
- Googols of Learning Child Development Center, Lawrence, KS, used its first round of impact grant money through Child Care Aware to give their full and part time staff substantial bonuses that were very much appreciated. This was a great way to say thank you to the staff for all of their hard work throughout this pandemic.

Upcoming Meetings (all via Zoom)

- Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund Meeting – Friday, October 1, 9:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m.
- Early Childhood Stakeholders Group Meeting – Friday, October 1, 1:30-3:00 p.m.
- Early Childhood Recommendations Panel meeting – Friday, October 15, 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.