

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

[Nichelle Adams](#) | Kansas Department for Children and Families
[Jennifer Adhima](#) | Kansas Head Start Association
[Marites Altuna](#) | Kansas Deaf-Blind Project/Kansas State School for the Blind
[Mallory Arellano](#) | Newman University
[Brenda Bandy](#) | Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition
[Tiffany Bartley](#) | Kansas Children's Service League
[Emily Barnes](#) | Barnes Child Care
[Amanda Billings](#) | Stepping Stones Academy
[Tanya Bulluck](#) | Child Start
[Eldonna Chesnut](#) | Johnson County Department of Health and Environment
[Kelly Davydov](#) | Child Care Aware of Kansas
[Jarvis Doleman](#) | Kansas Department for Health and Environment
[Tabitha Ewing](#) | Susanna Wesley Child Care
[Jennifer Forker](#) | Hutchinson Community College
[Asiya Foster](#) | EarlyStartART
[Jennifer Francois](#) | Kansas Institute for Early Childhood Education and Research
[Amy Gottschamer](#) | Googols of Learning Child Development Center
[Crystal Henry](#) | The Family Conservancy
[Callie Hoffman](#) | Kansas Parents as Teachers Association
[Kim Kennedy](#) | Kansas Department for Children and Families
[Dominique Lewis](#) | Guidepost Montessori
[David Lindeman](#) | University of Kansas Life Span Institute at Parsons
[Pam Noble](#) | Kansas Children's Service League
[Malissa Martin](#) | Community in Schools Mid-America
[Natalie McClane](#) | Kansas State Department of Education
[Amy Meek](#) | Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund
[Stephanie Parks](#) | KU Department of Special Education
[Patty Peschel](#) | Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities, Inc.
[Dannah Schatz](#) | Russell Child Development Center
[Lisa Schmidt](#) | Women's Community Y
[Megan Smith](#) | Kansas Department of Children and Families
[Logan Stenseng](#) | Thrive Allen County
[Cornelia Stevens, Chair](#) | TOP Early Learning Centers
[Tara Taylor](#) | Arkansas City USD 470
[Tricia Waggoner](#) | KDHE Bureau of Family Health
[Jennifer Whiteford-Houk](#) | Kansas Parents as Teachers Association
[Reva Wywadis](#) | Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Nichelle Adams

Kansas Department for Children and Families
Early Education and Child Services Manager



I currently work as the Early Education and Child Care Services Manager for the Kansas Department for 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 Employment 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.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Jennifer Adhima

Kansas Head Start Association
Executive Director



I became the Executive Director of the Kansas Head Start Association (KHSA) in July 2021 after working for sixteen years in the early childhood field in Wyandotte County. KHSA's mission is to raise the advocacy voice of Head Start parents, programs, and partners through professional development, collaboration, and innovative leadership. Head Start programs across Kansas are committed to supporting quality early childhood services and interagency coordination within their communities, and KHSA works to support the early childhood system and enhance collaboration among early childhood partners in Kansas.

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 honored to be part of the Recommendations Panel as the work we are doing will influence and shape policies and programs that will benefit all Kansas children. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time traveling and exploring new places with my spouse and daughter, being outdoors, listening to music, watching my daughter play tennis, and laughing with friends as often as possible.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Marites Altuna

Kansas State School for the Blind
Kansas Deaf-Blind Project Director



I serve as the Director of the Kansas Deaf-Blind Project/Kansas State School for the Blind. 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

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Mallory Arellano

Newman University
Early Childhood Coordinator



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.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Brenda Bandy

Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition

Co-Executive Director



Brenda is the Co-Executive Director of the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition (KBC) and oversee the KBC's programs which includes work with child care providers and the early childhood system in Kansas. I am excited to bring our 9 years of experience working with child care programs to my work on the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel. We have educated over 5,000 child care providers about their unique & powerful role in supporting breastfeeding families. I also look forward to bringing our cross sector, systems-level approach to this work. I am an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant and a retired La Leche League Leader with a passion for bringing people together to build a culture of breastfeeding support in Kansas. When not talking about breastfeeding, I can be found working on a puzzle or reading a book, waiting for one of my four young adult children to text me back.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Tiffany Bartley

Kansas Children's Service League

Healthy Families First Supervisor

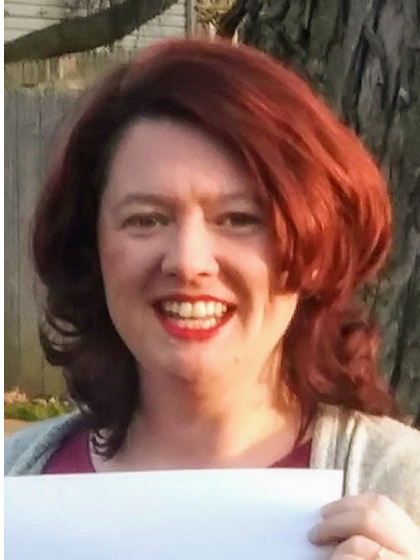


I have dedicated an entire career to children and families. It is not only my career but also my passion. My education includes a bachelor's degree in both Early Childhood Development and a second Bachelors in Management and Organization. I began my career in Head Start and continued it to include working at a Psychiatric Hospital for children as well as being part of the team at Children's Division in Missouri for many years. My area of focus now is infant mental health and the effect of trauma on children and families, as well providing resource access for families in all areas needed. My current role since my move to Kanas has been with DCCCA Family Preservation and currently is at KCSL as a supervisor for the grant program of Healthy Families First in which I lead a team that works intensively with families whom have been referred to Children's Division for various concerns that did not rise to the level of removal however parenting skills and resources are needed to be put in place for the family. I absolutely love working for KCSL and it rings true...do what you love, and you will never work a day in your life.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Emily Barnes

Barnes Child Care
Child Care Provider



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!

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Amanda Billings

Stepping Stones Academy
Child Care Provider



Hello, I am Amanda Billings. I grew up in rural Kansas, in the small community of Kirwin, but now reside in Portis. I am a graduate of Fort Hays State University and now, own and operate a Group Daycare Home in Osborne. I am also currently the Mayor of our small rural community, serve on the local school board as well as the preschool development committee in our district. I am involved in the Northern Kansas Regional Cohort through KCCTO, the Child Care Systems Improvement Team and serve as a board member of the North Central Kansas Special Education Cooperative.

I feel that living in rural Kansas, we sometimes get unintentionally over-looked when it comes to childcare. I feel that by serving on this Panel, I will be able to share my insight, as a provider and parent. As a member of the Panel, I would like to continue to focus on funding policies. As well as seeking support for a link between early childhood care and Kindergarten Readiness. I feel that there is still a gap between early childhood care and when a child is heading into the school system. Whether that be lack of resources, funding, or lack of willingness between school districts and childcare professionals. I feel that as a childcare provider, we are still looked at as 'babysitters' when in most cases that is not the case at all. I feel that now, more than ever, parents, regardless of age, race, etc. desperately need quality childcare that includes curriculum-based learning in line with the Kansas Early Learning Standards.

I am married to an amazing man, Jamie and we have two children, Gauge - 8 and Zoie – 6. We have a bulldog named Fletcher and a dachshund named, Ellie. We love our rural home!

It's a Great Day to be a BULLDOG!

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Tanya Bulluck

Child Start

Executive Director



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.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Eldonna Chesnut

Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE)
Division Director of Child Care Licensing



Eldonna Chesnut, RN, BSN, MSN is employed by Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE) as Division Director of Child Care Licensing, since 2001. She is a member of the inaugural class of Kansas Public Health Leadership Institute and completed a graduate certificate in Public Health Ethics. Eldonna serves as the JCDHE representative to many county and state organizations related to Child Care and in leadership roles in state and national Public Health associations.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Kelly Davydov

Child Care Aware of Kansas
Executive Director



As executive director for Child Care Aware of Kansas, Kelly Davydov leads Kansas' Child Care Resource and Referral network in addressing access to high-quality child care for young children and their families. Prior to joining Child Care Aware of Kansas, Ms. Davydov led Iowa's TANF 2-Generation anti-poverty initiative and served as project director for Early Childhood Iowa, the state's early childhood systems-building effort.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Jarvis Doleman

Kansas Department for Health and Environment
Children & Families Section Director



I am the Section Director for Early Care & Youth Programs/Child Care Licensing for the Department of Health and Environment. I have been in my role since September of 2022. Prior to coming to KDHE, I was employed for 11 years at Prairie Band Casino and Resort serving as a Surveillance Shift Manager. I obtained my bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice, with a minor in Social Work from the University of Tennessee at Martin. Outside of work I serve as the Program Director for a youth mentoring group called Young Minds Determined to Be Great (YMDG) which is a part of Topeka's own non-profit organization Omni Circle Group. I am married with 4 children, a three year old as well as three teenagers who are all currently in middle school. The non-profit work and the children's activities all keep me on the go! I am excited to be a part of this group which plays a large role in solving the issues and furthering the great work already being done in early childhood throughout the State of Kansas.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Tabitha Ewing

Susanna Wesley Child Care



Hello, I am currently a Childcare Director in Topeka, KS. I have only been in this role for a few months. Before this job, I have been working in the child care field or school districts as a paraprofessional since I was 16 years old off and on. I have worked with ages 2 ½ to school age. The reason for joining this panel is I want to be able to share my experiences working in the field from both the teaching and director side. I always love to learn new things and ideas and I also think this panel will do that for me as well. In my free time I enjoy spending time with family and friends but also some evenings just cuddled up on the couch with the blanket on binge watching shows.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Jennifer Forker

Hutchinson Community College

Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator



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.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Asiya Foster

EarlystART

Chief Innovations Officer



Dr. Asiya Foster is the Chief Innovations Officer for EarlystART (United Inner City Services) where she works on early childhood workforce development and advocacy issues. Previously she has held positions as Early Learning Program Manager with the Mid-America Regional Council and as Chair of Education and Early Childhood at Johnson County Community College. She also sits on numerous local, national, and international boards related to early childhood.

Dr. Foster holds a bachelor's degree in Child and Family Studies, a master's in Educational Administration, and a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis with a focus on early childhood education. She also holds certifications in TESOL for Very Young Learners, CELTA, and Education Diplomacy and is a former Fulbright Senior Scholar.

She currently lives in Overland Park with her son Muhammad.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Jennifer Francois

Kansas Institute for Early Childhood Education and Research
Director, Assistant Professor



Dr. Jennifer Francois is the Director for the Kansas Institute of Early Childhood Education and Research (KIECER) at Kansas State University which includes supporting the Kansas Childcare Training Opportunities (KCCTO) research initiatives and program evaluation. She is also a Professor of Practice in the department of Applied Human Sciences where she teaches courses in the Early Childhood Education program. Prior to joining the K-State faculty, Dr. Francois spent 9 ½ years working for Rainbows United in Wichita, KS. During her time at Rainbows United, she was their Early Childhood Coordinator and supervised the Community-based Education and Training Services (CBETS). She is currently the state of Kansas Recommended Practices Ambassador for the Division of Early Childhood and she is actively involved in local and state level organizations, including the Riley County Inter-Agency Coordinating Council and the Kansas Division for Early Childhood. Her research focuses on pre-service preparation and professional development in early intervention and early childhood special education, social-emotional development, and language acquisition in children.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Amy Gottschamer

Googols of Learning Child Development Center
Owner/Director



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

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Crystal Henry

The Family Conservancy

Start Young Manager



I am the Start Young Manager with The Family Conservancy and have been with TFC since the beginning of the project in 2018. I have 17 years of combined experience in child care, teaching, project management, and communications in various nonprofit organizations. Through my early childhood education major and Master's in Public Administration with an emphasis in nonprofit management, my education and experience places me in a unique position to bring solutions to the child care deficit in Kansas.

I meet monthly with the Wyandotte Economic Development Council's Workforce Solutions committee and Child Care sub-committee to address identified areas of improvement from the WyandotteCounty Public Health Department's Community Health Improvement Plan.

As a Kansas resident for nearly all of my life, and current recipient of child care services in Kansas City, Kansas, I have a firsthand look at child care needs and how they can be met. I am excited to bring both personal experience and the experience of working with child care providers and families in Wyandotte, Kansas for the past three years to the panel.

At home, I am "mommy" to an enthusiastic and curious 4-year-old, as well as an energetic and expressive 10-month old. My husband and I have designed, constructed, and planted a garden that will harvest pumpkins, cucumbers, corn, and watermelons this year, to name a few! We have a dog and a cat, but someday I would like to add some chickens to the crew. I practice yoga, enjoy being active outdoors, and try to make people laugh when at all possible.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Callie Hoffman

Kansas Parents as Teachers Association
Executive Director



I am the Executive Director for the Kansas Parents as Teachers Association (KPATA). KPATA supports early childhood home visiting programs with a parent education component in Kansas. We strive to build quality programs throughout Kansas so that all Kansas children will develop to their fullest potential.

- Funded by a Families First Prevention Services Grant, we partner with the Kansas Department for Children and Families to deliver intensive PAT services to families at imminent risk of entering foster care through the [Bright Futures Program](#).
- We provide [professional development](#) opportunities to home visitors and early childhood professionals.
- We [advocate](#) for policies that support parents with young children at the national, state, and local levels.

I lived in Olathe, KS with my husband Matt, our five children (Emily, Rudy, Clare, Colter & Jude) and our very well loved dog Bullet. We love traveling, spending time outdoors and watching sports.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Kim Kennedy

Kansas Department for Children and Families
Head Start Collaboration Office Director



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.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Dominique Lewis

Guidepost Montessori

Director



In addition to serving on the Kansas Early Childhood Recommendations Panel, I am a team member of the Office of Equity and Diversity at Children's Mercy Hospital. Our Office serves the hospital by spearheading the DEI Strategic Plan, developing cultural competency trainings and modules, partnering with various departments for leadership development and serving as a community liaison to ensuring health equity for all children.

I am also a community leader, working establish the Childhood Provider Network which aims to bring unity and a voice to ECE providers across Missouri. I provide organizational consultation to non-profits working in early childhood and community development. And this year I served as a Board Member for Pure Play Every Day, an organization committed to promoting play as wellness for children and adults.

I remain a member of Zeta Phi Beta International Sorority Inc. and the US Play Coalition.

Across the span of my career, I have remained involved in working with agencies that serve children, with special emphasis on access to high-quality Early Childhood services and access to health & wellness. Both pathways are paramount for a young child as they develop into the future of our community.

In my free time, I enjoy travel, reading and staying active in recreational sports.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

David Lindeman

University of Kansas Life Span Institute at Parsons
Director



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.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Malissa Martin

Community in Schools Mid-America
President-CEO



I'm the President and CEO of Communities In Schools of Mid-America, which is headquartered in Lawrence. I've been in this position since 2007 and have been thrilled to be a Kansan since 2005. I've been with the Communities In Schools network in different places since 1999, beginning in Houston and working at the local, state and national levels. Briefly, Communities In Schools places staff on school campuses to provide prevention and intervention services to at-risk students and their families and prevention services to the whole campus.

In my career and life, I've had the opportunity to work and live in urban, suburban, rural, and frontier communities, which gives me a broad perspective. I am deeply interested in children and family issues, and most of my career has focused on that, although I began in the corporate and small business arena.

Being a part of the panel is very exciting for me. I am looking forward to learning a lot, and I hope that my experience and perspective are a benefit to the group.

I'm also a creative person, and I spend a lot of time making art, gardening, and designing things in my head. I have two grown sons, a daughter-in-law, and two grandsons in the KC Metro and spend as much time with them as possible. I have a close-knit family still living in Texas and visit there or have them here frequently.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Natalie McClane

Kansas State Department of Education
Education Program Consultant



I am Natalie McClane, an Education Program Consultant on the Early Childhood Team at KSDE. I oversee the Preschool-Aged At-Risk and Preschool Pilot programs across the state and have been in my current position for five years. 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, music, gardening, 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.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Amy Meek

Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund
Early Childhood Program Director



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.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Pam Noble

Kansas Children's Service League
Assistant Director, PCA Kansas



I began my career at Kansas Children's Service League as part time employee the year my youngest child started kindergarten almost 17 years ago. My job description at that time included planning the Annual Governor's Conference for the Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect and the statewide Child Abuse Prevention month campaign.

My responsibilities have changed quite a bit throughout my years at KCSL. I now serve as the Assistant Director of Prevent Child Abuse Kansas. These programs include parent engagement and leadership, 1800Children, Crisis Nursery and Kinship Navigator as well as planning the annual Parent Leadership Conference. I'm in the process of handing off the Governor's Conference planning.

I have been fortunate to be part of the HOPE (Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences) Innovation Network, cohort 2 this year. The HOPE framework fits the work we do across the state.

Additionally, I serve as a member of the Kansas Power of the Positive and the Wichita Coalition for Child Abuse Prevention. I was also an original member of the School Mental Health Advisory Council.

My husband and I have been married for 28 years. We have two children, our oldest just finished his master's degree and the youngest is starting her master's in Public Health in August.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Stephanie Parks, PhD, OTR/L

University of Kansas Department of Special Education
Associate Teaching Professor



Stephanie is an Associate Teaching Professor in the Department of Special Education at the University of Kansas. She teaches courses in the blended initial licensure Early Childhood Unified teacher preparation program and is the Coordinator of Field Experiences, supervising graduate and undergraduate students in their student teaching experiences. Stephanie previously worked for the Early Childhood Personnel Center to provide technical assistance to states in developing their early childhood personnel development systems. As a practitioner, Stephanie has served children and families in Part C and 619 programs as an occupational therapist and early childhood special educator for over 20 years in the Kansas City Metropolitan area.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Patty Peschel

Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities, Inc.
Executive Director



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.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Dannah Schatz

Russell Child Development Center

Triple P Coordinator



For the past 7 years, I have been employed with Russell Child Development Center in southwest Kansas as an ABC (Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-Up) Infant and Toddler Coach and Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) Coach. I love working with families and strengthening their skills in order to create a better future for Kansas and our world.

I earned a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Newman University in 2001 and a Master of Science in PreK-12 Adaptive Special Education from Fort Hays State University in 2011. I taught first grade for 3 years and Early Childhood Special Education for 10 years. In 2014, I joined Russell Child Development Center as a Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) Coach. I received certification in Levels 2, 3, 4 and 5 Triple P programs and before COVID, taught a weekly seminar to inmates in the Ford County Detention Center. In June 2018, I earned full certification in the ABC-Infant (Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-Up) program. In March 2021, I also earned full certification in ABC-Toddler as well.

I look forward to learning more about the early childhood systems by participating in the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel. I am a huge advocate for early interventions for both children and parents and would shout the benefits from the rooftops if I could! As a teacher, I am also a big advocate for early childhood education.

I am married with four grown sons, two sets of boy twins. For 25 years, my home was an on-going experiment in Nature vs. Nurture! I enjoy learning all that I can about ACEs, brain development and developmental trauma. I now have an empty nest, but I enjoy crafting, creative arts therapy and camping with my husband and English bulldog named Sky.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Lisa Schmidt

Women's Community Y Child Development Center
Center Director



I am the Executive Director of the Women's Community Y Child Development Center in Leavenworth. The Y is an unaffiliated nonprofit organization that is a licensed childcare center.

My bachelor's is in Family and Consumer Science. I served on the board of directors of the Women's Community Y after my children had attended preschool here. My career journey into early learning has had some detours along the way that have equipped me for the nonprofit world.

I am an ardent believer that early learning education is where the foundation is built for the next generation of students. I am passionate about providing high quality learning environments to prepare the youngest learners and their families for their education. Creating a sustainable network for years to come is necessary for early learning's success. I am very interested in how this model will benefit the children, families and providers to create the best possible early learning situation for the future.

Young families need supports in order to work and go to school. These supports many times are focused on children and families that are impoverished. There is a working-class population that does not qualify for any supports and those children fall through the cracks. Attracting professionals to early learning and the ability to pay them with benefits for long term retention.

The Early Childhood Recommendations Panel has the opportunity to help affect change and access for families, their children and early learning professionals to build a strong educational foundation for the future.

My other interests include: spending time with family, sewing, quilting and cooking.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Megan Smith

Kansas Department of Children and Families (DCF)

QRIS Program Manager



I am the Quality Child Care and Continuous Improvement Manager for the Kansas Department of Children and Families (DCF). I have a Master's degree in Early Childhood Studies with a focus on Public Policy and Advocacy and 15 years' experience in the field of early childhood education. Prior to starting at DCF in February 2020, I was the Curriculum Director at a large NAEYC accredited center and also worked at Child Care Aware of Kansas providing technical assistance to providers and doing community engagement and outreach to support the building of child care capacity. I began my journey at DCF as the Links to Quality Development Specialist. My primary focus was on revising and developing the quality standards for the state's Quality Improvement System, Links to Quality post-pilot. I then moved into the Child Care Development Funds (CCDF) Program Support Specialist position to assist in the planning and obligating of the CCDF Pandemic Relief Funds. In my current position, my main priority is the implementation of Links to Quality and the Child Care Quality Improvement Support work, while also strategizing and aligning opportunities for improving child care quality in Kansas. My passion is early childhood and I truly believe all children deserve the best start in life because it sets them up for their future!

I am excited to serve on the Recommendations Panel as a representative of the state's Quality Improvement System and to work in partnership with everyone to continue building a system that best serves the children and families in Kansas.

Personally, I love travelling, trying new foods, and baking with my husband and two children.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Logan Stenseng

Thrive Allen County

Policy Advocate



In my job as a Policy & Strategic Initiatives Coordinator with Thrive Allen County I'm entirely focused on advancing ECE systems in rural Kansas through community engagement and policy advocacy. I am the Zero to Thrive coalition lead, which is a new project aimed at improving the availability of quality child care and public resources for families across Kansas- with an intentional focus on uplifting rural issues. My background is in promoting civic engagement and advocacy in higher education. I received my BA in Public Administration with a minor in Public Policy from the University of Kansas.

I serve as an At-Large Board Member on the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition, an Advisory Board Member for Let's Go Full STEAM Ahead, and a Board Member for the Kansas Civic Network.

I love spending time with friends and family, volunteering, hiking, DIY projects, tennis, and exploring new hobbies.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Cornelia Stevens, Chair

TOP Early Learning Centers
Executive Director



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.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Tara Taylor

Arkansas City USD 470

Head Start Director



I became the USD 470 Director for Head Start in July 2020 after 25 years in special education as well as building and district level administration. I have a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Southwestern College, and Master's Degrees in Special Education and Building Leadership from Emporia State University.

I am excited to focus my full attention on quality early childhood education, early intervention services, community collaborations, and strengthening families. I look forward to being a part of the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel to improve coordination of early childhood resources and services that will make a positive impact for children and families.

I enjoy spending time with my family, cooking, going to sporting events, and traveling.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Tricia Waggoner

KDHE Bureau of Family Health

Part C Coordinator



Tricia Waggoner has an Associate's Degree in Fine Art, a Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology with a minor in History, and a Master's Degree in Anthropology. In her sixteen years working for the State of Kansas she has run multiple programs, done statutory work including: managing compliance for state and federal laws for both federal, state, and municipal agencies. She has coordinated between multiple state and federal agencies, tribal organizations, private organizations, and members of the public on State projects. She has experience in education including developing and implementing public educational programs, developing museum exhibits, teaching classes for members of the public and at the college level, working with teachers, curriculum specialists, and directly with students on subjects in science and history. Currently she is the State Part C Coordinator overseeing Kansas Early Childhood Developmental Services a program of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Jennifer Whiteford-Houk

Kansas Parents as Teachers Association

Parent Educator



I'm a passionate advocate for early childhood education and the needs of families. I currently hold a Bachelor of Fine Art from the Kansas City Art Institute and utilize my creativity to reach families and children with Kansas Parents as Teachers as a Parent Educator. Additionally, I continue to advocate for children's rights and educator knowledge in the areas of play and artistic freedom.

I am active in creating trainings for parents and teachers in the areas of play-based learning and in my community through volunteer work with children. I am currently on the Kansas Family Advisory Council Early Childhood Work group as well as the Greater Kansas City AEYC board.

I live in rural Franklin County where I enjoy playing outdoors, raising animals and gardening with my husband and our six-year-old son.

2022-2023 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Reva Wywadis

Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas
Executive Director



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!