

KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD GOVERNANCE

Kansas EC Transition Task Force Meeting 1 Issue Brief



THE KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION TASK FORCE

On January 10, 2023, Governor Laura Kelly issued [Executive Order 23-01](#) creating the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force. This diverse group of early childhood stakeholders is charged with assessing the state's existing early childhood landscape and bringing forward both process recommendations and draft legislation creating a potential new cabinet agency under which most or all of the state's programs for young children and their families would be housed.

The Task Force will meet between March and December 2023 to complete its work, with support from [The Hunt Institute](#), a non-partisan education policy support to the nation's governors and state lawmakers established in 2001 by four-term North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt. Barry Downing, President and Chief Executive Officer of Northrock, Inc. will serve as the Task Force's Honorary Chair, alongside co-chairs Cornelia Stevens, Executive Director of TOP Early Learning Centers, and Sam Huenergardt, Chief Executive Officer for AdventHealth's Mid-America Region.

EARLY CHILDHOOD GOVERNANCE

Early childhood governance refers to a state's organizational structure and its placement of authority and accountability for making program, policy, financing, and implementation decisions related to publicly funded early care and education for children from birth to age five. An [effective model of governance](#) should create coherence, foster accountability and transparency, and improve quality and accessibility.

In many states, however, this coherence is currently lacking. With federal funds typically following the path of least resistance at the state level (traveling from individual federal agencies to their state level counterparts), it is not uncommon for services for young children to be spread across multiple agencies at the state level. Not only do these decentralized structures run the risk of sub-optimizing public investments – creating barriers to program coordination and the possibility of administrative inefficiencies – but also create challenging bureaucratic mazes for families to navigate in their efforts to access services.

A growing number of states are now bucking this trend, consolidating services into single agencies – with some creating new cabinet agencies (New Mexico, Colorado, Oregon) and others merging programs under an existing organizational umbrella (Missouri, Virginia). While challenging to undertake, these states routinely report improved coordination, the elimination of duplicative administrative costs and, therefore, opportunities to dedicate more public funds to direct service to children.

KANSAS' EARLY CHILDHOOD GOVERNANCE

Kansas is currently a [coordinated system](#), with programming for early childhood housed across within three state agencies: The Kansas Department of Education (which also houses the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund), the Department of Health and Environment, and the Kansas Department for Children and Families.

Primarily because of this split across multiple agencies, Kansas was [ranked 49th in the nation](#) in a January 2023 analysis of early childhood system coordination and efficiency published by the Bipartisan Policy Center, affirming Governor Kelly's decision to seat the Task Force and pursue a more streamlined approach.

In preparation for the work of the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force, Governor Kelly's office and The Hunt Institute have coordinated with these key agency partners to begin work on a written program inventory, describing and detailing the statutory authorities, funding and staffing of each of the early childhood programs under the agencies' purview.

As a supplement and overview of the (much lengthier) program inventory document also provided for your review, a high-level summary of the programs housed under each agency is included below.

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Department of Health and Environment

The [Kansas Department of Health and Environment's](#) (KDHE) [Bureau of Family Health](#) is responsible for several programs to enhance the health of Kansas women and children through partnerships with families and communities. The Bureau of Family Health provides the following early childhood services:

- [Child Care Licensing](#): Regulations in child care protect the health, safety, and welfare of children receiving care. Licensed child care includes family child care homes and centers, and a multitude of state laws ([KSA 65-501 to 65-535](#)) define and authorize DHE's licensing activities.
- [Infant-Toddler Services](#): Authorized under [Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#), Kansas Early Childhood Developmental Services is the state's early intervention program for infants and toddlers (birth to three) with disabilities and/or developmental delays. This work is [authorized](#) annually by the US Department of Education and funded by both the U.S. Department of Education (federal) and the state [Children's Initiatives Fund](#) (CIF).
- [Nutrition & WIC Services](#): The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a nutrition program aimed at pregnant women, new mothers, and children under five years old. This is a federally funded program through the US Department of Agriculture, [authorized](#) in the Child Nutrition Act of 1996 and the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.
- [Kansas Home Visiting](#): Kansas provides numerous in-home supports and resources to families with young children, including Early Head Start, Healthy Families America, and Parents as Teachers. This work is funded through the federal [Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting](#) (MIECHV) program and the state [Children's Initiatives Fund](#) (CIF).

Department for Children and Families

The [Kansas Department for Children and Families](#) (DCF) oversees the delivery of social services such as child support, employment, prevention, and protection. Formerly the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, DCF was formed July 1, 2012 through [Executive Reorganization Order Number 41](#), issued by Governor Sam Brownback. This transition made the wellbeing of children and families the [central focus](#) of the agency, and DCF's [Division of Economic & Employment Services](#) currently offers a number of early childhood services:

- [Child Care Assistance](#): This subsidy program helps families pay for the cost of child care. Eligibility is outline by the Kansas Legislature ([KSA 39-709](#)) and is funded through the federal [Child Care and Development Fund](#) (CCDF) and the state [Children's Initiatives Fund](#) (CIF).
- [Child Care Quality \(QRIS\)](#): The quality rating improvement system (QRIS) provides a statewide approach to assess, improve, and communicate the quality of early care settings. This work is funded through the federal [Child Care and Development Fund](#) (CCDF) and the state [Children's Initiatives Fund](#) (CIF).
- [Kansas Head Start Collaboration Office](#): This Office promotes the collaboration of Head Start programs across the state, developing multi-agency, public-private partnerships to improve outcomes for low-income children and families in Kansas. Funds are awarded to the Office under Section 642B of the [2007 Head Start Act](#).
- [Kansas Early Head Start Child Care Partnership and Early Head Start Home Visitation](#): Kansas provides grants to local Head Start programs to offer both early care and education services and home visiting to pregnant women, infants, and toddlers. This program is offered in partnership with the federal [Administration for Children and Families](#), and it is funded with a combination of federal and state dollars.
- [Parent Skill-Building – Family First Prevention Services Act](#): The Federal Family First Prevention Services Act provides matching federal funding to provide evidence-based services to prevent entry into foster care. Under this program, Kansas provides home visiting services via [Parents as Teachers](#) and [Healthy Families America](#).

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Department of Education

The [Kansas State Department of Education](#) (KSDE) provides leadership, resources, support, and accountability to the state's K-12 education system. The department's [Division of Learning Services](#) oversees all federal and statewide education services and accreditations, providing the following early childhood services:

- [State Funded Pre-Kindergarten](#): Kansas offers two preschool programs for three- and four-year-old children: the Preschool-Aged At-Risk Program ([KSA 72-5154](#)) and Kansas Preschool Pilot. These programs are offered in [99 percent](#) of school districts.
 - Students in the Preschool-Aged At-Risk and preschool-aged students with disabilities count as a ½ student when calculating a district's enrollment for the [state school finance formula](#).
 - The Kansas Preschool Pilot is funded through federal TANF funds and state [Children's Initiatives Fund](#) (CIF). During the pandemic, [funding from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief](#) (GEER) fund was also available, but KSDE does not anticipate this one-time funding source will continue in 2023-2024.
- [Preschool for Students with Disabilities](#): The IDEA Preschool Program supports education services for young children with disabilities aged three to five. This work is [authorized](#) annually by the US Department of Education and federally funded through the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B, Section 619](#). The Kansas Legislature also outlines special education requirements in a number of laws ([KSA 72-3403 to 72-3481](#)).
- [Kansas Parents as Teachers](#): Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an evidence-based home visiting model providing parents with the skills and knowledge they need to help make informed decisions regarding their child's education. [K.S.A. 72-4161](#) et seq. authorizes districts to offer parent education programs. [K.S.A. 72-4163](#) designates the State Board of Education as responsible for awarding parent education grants to school districts.
- State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) and Local Interagency Coordinating Councils: The SICC mission is to ensure a comprehensive service delivery system of integrated services is available in Kansas to all children with or at risk for developmental delays from birth through age 5 and their families. The SICC advises and assists the Governor and state agencies on these issues.
- [Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) (CACFP): This program provides reimbursement for healthy meals and snacks serving children in agencies such as child care, Head Start, and after school care. This is a federally funded program authorized by the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act ([PL 79-396](#)).

KANSAS CHILDREN'S CABINET AND TRUST FUND

The [Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund](#) was established in 1999 by the Kansas Legislature ([KSA 38-1901](#)) to oversee the expenditures from the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement, evaluate programs, support the prevention of child abuse and neglect, and assist the Governor in developing and implement comprehensive, coordinated services to Kansas children and families. The revenue from the tobacco settlement is used to fund the Cabinet's [Children's Initiatives Fund](#) (CIF), which supported [14 programs](#) in FY 2021. The Cabinet is composed of [15 members](#), with five voting members appointed by the Governor and four voting members appointed by legislative leadership. The remaining six ex-officio members represent state agencies. While the Cabinet is an independent body, KSDE has served as its fiscal agent since 2016.

In December 2018, KSDE was awarded a federal Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG B-5) of [\\$4,482,305](#). KSDE, along with the Children's Cabinet, DCF, and KDHE were responsible for directing state activity to complete a statewide needs assessment and strategic plan for early childhood, resulting in the [All In For Kansas Kids](#) report.

By [Executive Order 20-02](#) in 2020, the Children's Cabinet became the designated Early Childhood Advisory Council (as required by the federal [Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007](#)) and lead applicant for PDG B-5 renewal funding. This order also established the [Kansas Early Childhood Recommendations Panel](#), an advisory board with members appointed by the governor.