THE hunt institute

FINAL REPORT OF THE KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION TASK FORCE

December 2023

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A MESSAGE FROM GOVERNOR LAURA KELLY

Greetings,

In my inaugural address, I laid out a vision for my second term—making Kansas the best place to live, work, and raise a family. Critical to that vision is improving the services Kansas provides to our children—the leaders of tomorrow who will determine the future of our state.

We know that the earliest years of childhood are crucial in determining the trajectory of people's lives, from their academic achievement to their healthy development and social mobility. To give our children the best possible start, we must ensure they have access to care, education, and opportunities to safely grow and engage with other children before reaching kindergarten. Devoting resources to early childhood care and education is one of the best investments we can make as a state. Studies have shown that every dollar invested in early childhood development yields between $4 and $16 in financial benefit to the state by lowering costs later in life.

Expanding access to early childhood care and education programs has been one of my top priorities since taking office in 2019. Without access to high-quality affordable care and education, Kansas will lack the talented workforce essential to bring and maintain economic prosperity in every corner of the state. This is a nonpartisan issue that affects all Kansans—rural and urban alike—and addressing it pays dividends for everyone in the state. As a state senator, I secured the first state general fund dollars for early childhood programs. As governor, I've invested more than $450 million in state and federal funds into this sector to support providers and increase access to reliable, high-quality programs. We've also worked with both parties to support the business sector in providing these services to their workforce to support Kansas' unprecedented economic growth.

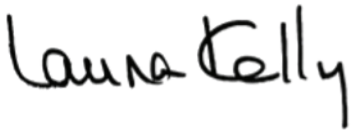
For too long, Kansas has delivered early childhood services in an inadequate and overly complex way. Currently, Kansans must engage with four different state agencies to receive support or access critical services. This creates inefficiencies, redundancies, and barriers to access for families and businesses. Streamlining the administration of these programs and reducing the red tape around accessing them will save money and make it easier for families and providers to navigate the system.

In January 2023, I was proud to take a significant step to move our early childhood system forward. As my first official act of my second term, I signed Executive Order 23-01, creating the Early Childhood Transition Task Force. The Task Force was charged with reviewing our current early childhood care and education system and creating a blueprint for unifying these various services into a single state entity to allow for better coordination, accountability, and oversight. The Task Force has spent the last nine months reviewing the current structure of our early childhood system, speaking with states that have consolidated their systems, and traveling to communities across the state to hear firsthand the needs and challenges facing families and service providers. I am proud of this group's efforts and dedication to reforming our current system. This report represents the culmination of nearly a year's worth of work that has resulted in recommendations for moving Kansas forward to improve the experiences of families, providers, communities, and businesses.

I sincerely thank the members of the Early Childhood Transition Task Force for their tireless efforts to craft this report. Their commitment to Kansas children and families reminds us that all Kansans are early childhood stakeholders. We are also grateful to the Hunt Institute for its hard work, policy support, and leadership of the Task Force's efforts.

Every child in Kansas deserves a healthy childhood supported by a system that provides access to robust, effective care and education, responds and adapts to the needs of parents and caregivers, and is equally accessible to all communities throughout the state. Starting our children off on the right foot early in life is the best investment we can make and will create a stronger, more prosperous Kansas for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Governor Laura Kelly

On behalf of the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force, it is our privilege to share the group's final report and recommendations.

Over the course of nine months, the Task Force has worked tirelessly - studying Kansas' early childhood landscape and systems, listening to stakeholders, consulting with sister states and resource experts, and engaging in deep discussion, all leading to a single conclusion: Kansas families deserve a simpler and better coordinated system of early childhood governance.

Early this year, the Bipartisan Policy Center issued a report assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of state early childhood systems, ranking Kansas 49th in the nation. As in most states, Kansas' early childhood programs are spread across multiple government agencies, creating duplication and inefficiencies that force Kansas families to navigate a needlessly complex bureaucratic maze in order to access time sensitive services. It's time we did better.

It's important to note this challenge is not unique to Kansas, but what is unique about Kansas is the state's intent to correct course, set forth powerfully in Governor Kelly's executive order. With the Task Force's work, the state joins a handful of states on the leading edge of this important conversation. We have optimized our coordinated system and pushed it to its limits, however, with the creation of a unified early childhood entity, the state can become a model for the nation. More importantly, it will help Kansas children access services more easily, preparing them to thrive in school and life.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Task Force's membership and to our partners at The Hunt Institute for all the thoughtful work that has led us to this point.

Sam Huenergardt
CEO, Mid-America Region
AdventHealth System
Co-Chair

Cornelia Stevens
Executive Director
TOP Early Learning Centers
Co-Chair

Over the last five years, Kansas has made significant strides to improve our early childhood care and education system. With intentional focus on developing strategies to meet the needs of families, our system is nimbler and more responsive. Kansans are also more hopeful that the state is headed in the right direction. Despite this progress, more can be done to improve the delivery of services to children and families and reduce the burdens placed on families and communities. As identified in the Bipartisan Policy Center's recent review of early childhood systems across the country, Kansas remains at the bottom. If we want to improve access to care and transform Kansas' early childhood system to one of the best in the country, more must be done to create a more efficient and effective system.

One of the main ways that states are improving their systems is through the reform of their early childhood governance systems. Early childhood governance refers to a state's organizational structure and its placement of authority and accountability for program, policy, financing, and implementation decisions for publicly funded early care and education for children from birth to age five. In many states, including Kansas, these systems are siloed and defined by the administration of programs across multiple state agencies, requiring extensive cross-agency collaboration and coordination. States who are innovating and making significant improvements to their systems are moving away from this coordinated model to the unification of services under one single-source of authority. Creating better alignment and easing system navigation has been identified as major needs through the state's *All In For Kansas Kids* Needs Assessment and Early Childhood Strategic Plan—the comprehensive review that currently serves as the driver for Kansas' early childhood delivery system.

To address these perpetual challenges impacting our system, Governor Laura Kelly issued Executive Order 23-01, creating the Early Childhood Transition Task Force. The Task Force was charged with reviewing our current governance system and creating a blueprint for the unification of programs and services that are currently dispersed across four different state agencies. Over the course of a year, this group has conducted a comprehensive review of our system, met with over 500 early childhood stakeholders to hear their experiences navigating our system, and crafted a transition plan for the unification of early childhood programs and services under a single authority. Through the unification of these services, the Task Force believes that Kansas can create greater government accountability of our system, streamline processes to reduce bureaucratic red tape, eliminate duplication across the system, and enhance the experiences of children and families by creating a one-stop shop for early childhood care and education.

This final report represents a culmination of this work and provides a comprehensive overview of how Kansas can continue its historical commitment to supporting the healthy development of our children and the ability for families to access the programs and services they need. The report begins with a deep dive into the issue of early childhood and its importance to Kansas' children, families, communities, and economy. The report then provides an overview of Kansas' current system and the work state leaders have been engaging in over the last few years to move the system forward. Finally, the report provides an overview of many of the Task Force's activities. This includes background on the Task Force and its operation, a landscape and fiscal analysis of the current system, and recommendations on how the state can unify its early childhood system. These recommendations are split into three categories: transition logistics, programmatic movements, and data and metrics. Each of these categories provide guidance on what programs should be unified in a streamlined governance system, how a transition can and should occur, and what data and metrics need to be tracked to ensure continuous improvement and accountability.

Through extensive review of our current early childhood system, the Task Force recommends that Kansas unify "early childhood care and education services into a single state entity—reforming our coordinated system into a consolidation or creation model" of governance. The group believes that, if accomplished, transforming Kansas current governance structure will pay dividends for children, families, and the entire state.

SECTION ONE: SETTING THE STAGE

The work of the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force has been centered around the state's programs and services for young children, how they are situated within state government and whether their realignment might benefit not only these children, but also their families and Kansas taxpayers more broadly. Before addressing the work and recommendations of the Task Force itself, this report begins by orienting readers to the importance of these programs, the significance of the early years, and the substantial return on investment documented in association with their high-quality delivery.

THE SCIENCE OF BRAIN DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING

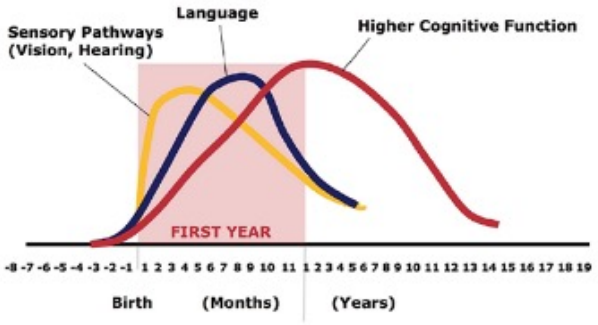
Decades of research on the developing brain provides powerful evidence on the importance early childhood investments play in children's healthy development, forming strong attachments, and setting the foundation for life-long learning and success. A working knowledge of this research is especially critical for policymakers, who have the power to dramatically influence their states' environment for young children and their families.

The Developing Brain

Learning begins in utero, with babies only hours old already able, for example, to distinguish the native language of their mothers. The earliest years of life – particularly the period from prenatal to age three – represent a unique developmental window during which the fundamental architecture of the brain is wired at an astonishing rate of one million new neural connections per second. There is no other period across the lifespan in which the process of creating connections between nerve cells in the brain occurs at this rate. Thus, it is vital to recognize that connections that form in the early years provide either a strong or weak foundation for neurological connections that support later success.

Human Brain Development

Neutral Connections for Different Functions Develop Sequentially



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Interactions are at the Core of Brain Development and Early Learning

Interactions children experience during the early years of development help shape the architecture of the brain. When an infant or young child babbles, gestures, or even cries, and an adult responds appropriately, neural connections are built and strengthened in the child's brain. These skills support further development, communication, and social skills. When caregivers are nurturing and responsive to a child's signals and needs, they provide an environment rich in the opportunity for children to learn and thrive. It is important to recognize this significance to ensure policies are established to support caregivers in creating and maintaining positive interactions with children that will lead to academic and life success.

The Impact of Adverse Early Experiences

Just as receptive the developing brain is to healthy nurturing environments, it is also susceptible to circumstances that threaten this development. Extensive research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) and toxic stress show that healthy child development is derailed by excessive or prolonged activation of the stress response systems in the body and brain. Children exposed to frequent or prolonged stress – caused by physical or emotional abuse, or neglect– may experience developmentally toxic effects. Prolonged activation of the body's

stress response systems – labeled toxic stress – can disrupt development of the brain's architecture and increase the risk of stress-related disease and cognitive impairment well into adulthood.

Adverse Experiences Can Widen the Early Achievement Gap

A child exposed to toxic stress is more likely to experience disruptions in the development of their executive function skills (i.e., inhibitory control, mental flexibility, and short-term memory), vocabulary, and language processing skills. Often resulting in an increase in challenging behavior, increased need for special education services, and the need for remedial supports.

Even though many states identify the start of formal schooling as kindergarten, as detailed through the importance of early brain development and positive early childhood experiences, achievement gaps can manifest long before children reach the schoolhouse doors. A 2009 study identified disparities in the cognitive development, general health, and social-emotional development of low-income children. These gaps are evident as early as nine months of age and grow larger by 24 months. There is little question, that both children and taxpayers would be best served by preventing these gaps through the delivery of high-quality early childhood supports.

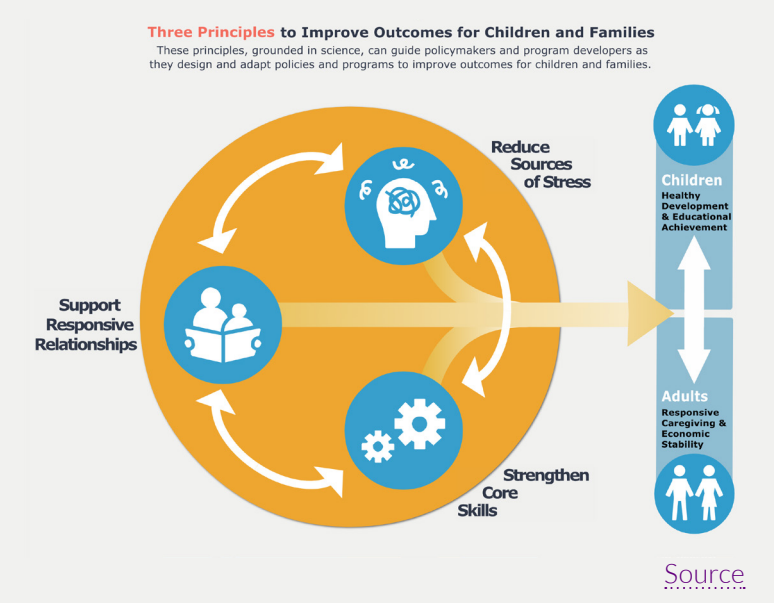
Protecting Children from the Effects of Toxic Stress

Although toxic stress can play a significant role in children's development, it is not the only factor that influences future success. During the early years of development, secure caregiver relationships are at the forefront of mitigating the negative effects of adverse childhood experiences. Positive early interactions and relationships that children form with their caregivers are one of the most important influences on brain development, executive functions, and social-emotional skills.

Family engagement and support through early childhood care and education are particularly important for children and families who face multiple challenges such as poverty, homelessness, and language barriers. Supportive caregivers, even in the face of toxic stress, can help children learn coping skills and resiliency to overcome the threats to development caused by toxic stress. The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University suggests three science-based principles to implement in an early childhood systems to better protect children from the effects of toxic stress:

- **Support responsive relationships for children and adults** to help buffer children from excessive stress and strengthen the building blocks of resilience.
- **Reduce sources of stress in the lives of children and families** to lessen the toll of adversity and make it easier for adults to provide protective relationships for young children.
- **Strengthen core skills** for planning, adapting, and achieving goals, to support children's development of resiliency and build skills that will help them succeed in school.

Science to Policy and Practice



THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD INVESTMENT

Investing in young children has demonstrated substantial returns on investment for society, families, and children, making the case for policymakers to expand early childhood supports and funding opportunities. Nobel Prize-winning economist, Dr. James Heckman, has been studying the economic impact of quality early childhood programs. As detailed below, conclusions have been drawn about the multifaceted positive impact of quality early childhood programs.

For every dollar spent on quality early childhood education programs for children that are disadvantaged, taxpayers can expect a return on investment of at least 13 percent.

Contemporary understanding of a return on investment includes nurturing productive citizens (reduction in incarceration, and increased employment and tax-paying ability), improved health outcomes (improved healthy behaviors and increased health expenditure due to higher income), and reduced need for social services (reduction in retention, special education, and welfare supports).

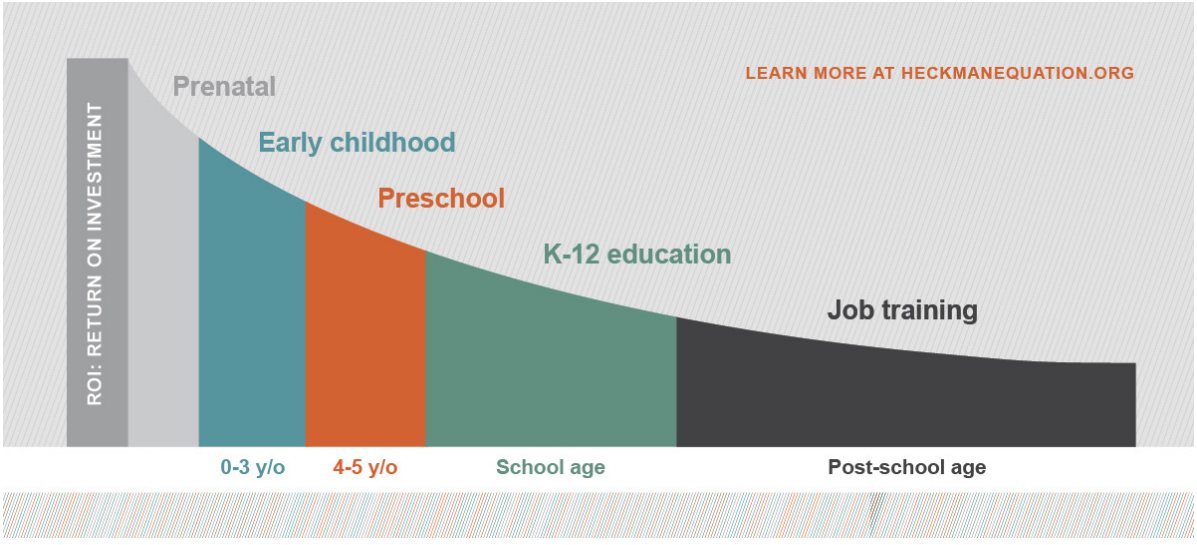
Children participating in the landmark Perry Preschool Project, on average:

- grew up in stable two-parent households,
- reported higher graduation rates,
- lower school suspension rates,
- reduced criminal activity,
- higher full-time employment,
- had higher earnings as a result of improved home environments.

When we give children what they need to learn, develop, and thrive, they give back through a lifetime of productive citizenship.

JACK P. SHONKOFF
2017

Rate of return to investment in human capital



Source

Clearly, investing in the learning and growth of young children is vital for economic development. Quality early childhood education has been proven to contribute to many short- and long-term benefits for children, including preparing them to be productive members of the future workforce.

Business leaders depend on a skilled workforce to support today's economy. Gains from quality early education extend far beyond childhood and foundational skills necessary for the workforce such as problem-solving, decision-making skills, and collaboration, are developed during early childhood. Early childhood not only yields better outcomes for young children but also can save taxpayers money and ensure future generations are prepared to enter the workforce.

Impact on the Business Sector

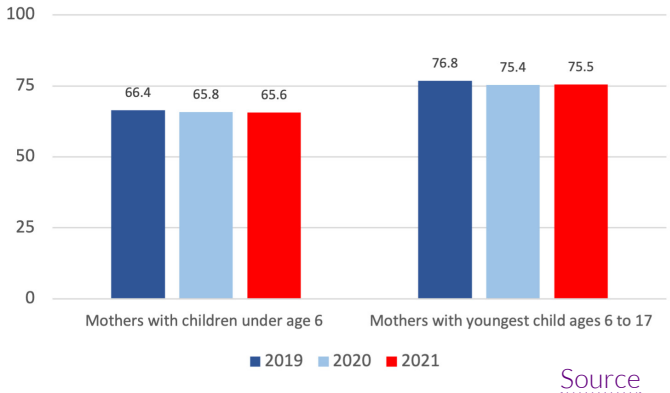
The child care industry is vital to the economic success of states. In 2022, the U.S. child care industry was valued at $60.4 billion, and is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 4.18% from 2023 to 2030. Child care revenue is comparable to other important industries such as medical and diagnostic labs ($47.2 billion), spectator sports ($46 billion), pipeline transportation ($44.5 billion), and water transportation ($43.3 billion).

Nationwide, inadequate infant toddler care costs working parents an estimated $78 billion a year in lost income, costs businesses more than $23 billion a year in lost productivity, and costs taxpayers $21 billion a year in lower income tax and sales tax revenue, costing Americans a total of $122 billion annually. Furthermore, when child care and schools closed during the pandemic, roughly $700 billion was lost in revenue and productivity, equivalent to about 3.5 percent of the national gross domestic product (GDP).

Parent Participation in the Workforce

In Kansas, an estimated 72 percent of young children (148,000 children under the age of six) reside in households in which all available parents participate in the workforce. Child care is critical not only in providing families the option to return/enter the workforce, but also contributes to family members maintaining their jobs and work-life. Research has shown that inadequate child care negatively impacts family income, business profitability and productivity, state revenue and the overall economy.

Labor force participation rate of mothers by age of youngest child, 2019-21 Annual averages



Source

Mothers are a substantial part of the workforce and caregiving responsibilities at home and work threaten women's ability to remain and progress in the workplace. When new mothers leave the workforce, businesses suffer. On average, businesses lose $92,000 when a mother leaves their current position during the first year of motherhood. As of 2022, mother's workforce participation rates peak at 75.5 percent for mothers with school-aged children (ages 6 to 17), and decreases while children are younger. Just over 65 percent of mothers with children under age 6 and 62.3 percent of mothers with children under the age of 3 participate in the workforce. Although half of mothers with infants (58.5 percent) participate in the workforce, they are the least likely group to do so.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, child care disruptions threatened families' ability to participate in the workforce. Specifically, more than one in three women caregivers, according to the RAPID-EC survey, were forced to leave the workforce or reduce their work hours, even though most could not afford to do so. While progress has been made to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on women's workforce participation, as of November 2022, there are still 1.8 million women who are missing from the work force since 2020.

Business leaders and policymakers can capitalize on the economic benefits of early care and education by investing in measures that support working families, in particular mothers, and their young children. Investing in quality early childhood programs produces positive outcomes for children, business and for overall society.

STATE OF THE CHILD CARE INDUSTRY

As stated above, child care plays a critical role in both the economic prosperity of states, and in children's healthy development. Child care can occur in a variety of settings; while naming conventions differ slightly across states, distinct settings include:

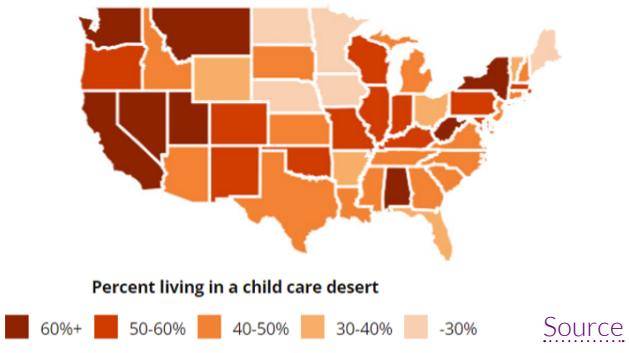
- **Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN)** care is informally secured and generally delivered by a close friend or family member in their home.
- **Family Child Care (FCC)** occurs in caregiver's home, with one to two providers looking after a small group of mixed-age children. These settings often reflect families' cultural and linguistic background and offer care at non-traditional hours.
- **Child Care Centers** typically operate out of commercial buildings, and therefore enroll a larger number of children. (Under limited circumstances, residential properties can also house center-based programs in Kansas if they meet licensure requirements, including fire marshal and local zoning approvals.) Centers group children by age, providing a classroom-like environment, and often have the most regulations.
- **Head Start** is a federally funded, community-based program serving infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children from low-income families.
- **Public Preschool** is typically offered within school districts, nonprofit- or faith-based organizations, or child care centers. These programs are only open to three- and four-year-old children and focus on school readiness.

States have increasingly supported the implementation of a mixed delivery systems, which provides state funding to a diverse set of early childhood settings in order to ensure accessible, high-quality care options for families. A mixed delivery system capitalizes on the expertise of providers and existing infrastructure, making it both a cost-effective and sustainable method to deliver high-quality care to all children. Mixed delivery systems also ensure continuity of care and promote family choice, allowing parents to decide what early childhood setting is best for their child and family.

Child Care Access

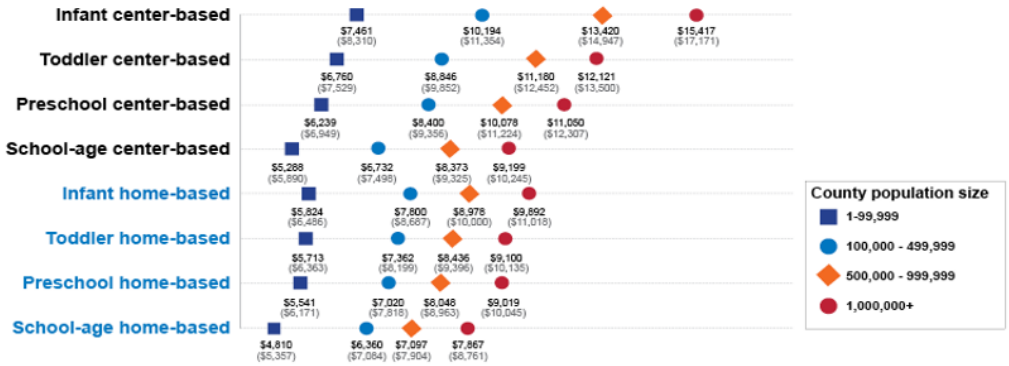
While a variety of early childhood settings exist, many families still struggle to access convenient, reliable care. Even before the pandemic, over half of Americans (51 percent) lived in a child care desert, meaning licensed child care slots were extremely limited or completely unavailable in their community. This is especially true for families with very young children, as access to infant and toddler care is particularly limited. Furthermore, Black or Latino families, families with low- or middle-incomes, or families living in rural geographies also tend to experience more limited access to child care.

Without care, children and families face significant disruptions in their daily lives. Research finds that, on average, parents lose five percent of their working week due to lack of child care, leading to lower productivity, less work experience, and fewer opportunities to advance. When families have access to stable child care options, parents are less likely to take time out of the labor force and can devote more time to their work and family needs.



Source

Median annual price of child care for one child



Source: National Database of Childcare Prices 2018 (U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau) and American Community Survey 2014-2018 (U.S. Census Bureau)
Note: Childcare prices are presented in 2018 and 2022 real dollars. Estimates for 2022 are in parentheses.

Source

Child Care Affordability

Additionally, families struggle to find affordable child care for young children. In a licensed child care center, the average estimated monthly cost for a preschool-aged child is $904. For an infant, the cost of care rises to $1,324, largely due to smaller group sizes and higher adult-to-child ratios required for infants and toddlers. With the high expense of child care, many families experience financial instability, and often find it more cost effective to leave the workforce rather than pay for child care.

Child care subsidies can mitigate issues of affordability. Funded by state and federal dollars, child care subsidies provide eligible low-income families (as defined by the state) with direct financial support for licensed center- or home-based child care expenses. In a recent survey by the Morning Consult, data indicated 73 percent of respondents support public policies designed to help families afford the cost of child care. Child care subsidies can also encourage greater workforce participation and economic growth, showcasing an average state economic growth increases $3.80 per dollar of additional federal spending on Subsidized Child Care Assistance Programs.

73%

Survey Respondents Support Public Policies Designed to Help Families Afford the Cost of Child Care

Source

Programs that make child care affordable not only help support workforce and economic growth, but also encourage families to seek the best care possible for their children. Families given the financial support needed to access high-quality child care are able to place their children in environments conducive to healthy development and learning. Research shows that high-quality child care can mitigate a variety of disparities young children may face, improving both their short- and long-term outcomes.

Child Care Quality

In addition to access and affordability, experts recognize that high-quality early childhood experiences are essential to achieving the short- and long-term benefits for children and families. Although the definition of quality varies by states and programs, elements are common across all definitions: physical environment, staff qualifications, interactions, developmentally and culturally appropriate curriculum, professional development, and program evaluation. States often define and measure child care quality through a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). While these programs are not typically mandatory, participating providers may receive additional resources or financial incentives; public QRIS data also allow parents to make informed decisions when selecting child care. Additionally, the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER) provides quality ratings for all state-funded preschool programs in their annual State of Preschool Yearbook.

Early Childhood Workforce

Despite the critical role child care plays in a state's economic and social success, the nearly 5 million individuals who form the early childhood workforce (majority of whom are women) have not been given the support needed for success. The educator pipeline is broken, with often convoluted pathways for the child care workforce to enter or advance in the field. This has led to a range of qualifications among child care providers, with each program defining its own credentialing, high-quality standards, and even minimum professional qualifications. Furthermore, the guidelines, accountability systems, and supports for early childhood professionals in the field are generally siloed, inequitable, and driven by a mix of state and federal regulations. Together, this creates a burdensome system for the early childhood workforce.

93%
of ECE Workforce are Women

19%
of ECE Workforce are Latina

15%
of ECE Workforce are Black

Source

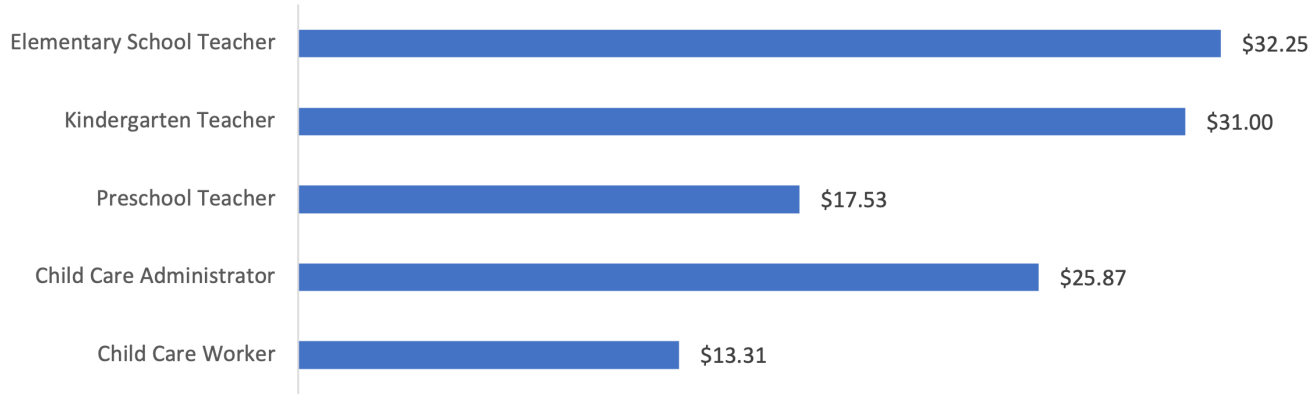
7.7x
Early educator workforce experiences poverty 7.7 times higher than teachers in the K-8 system

Source

Additionally, many in the early childhood workforce do not receive a compensation in line with their state's minimum living wage; as of April 2023, the median wage of child care workers is just $13.71 per hour. Many in the early childhood workforce also lack access to critical benefits such as paid sick leave and health insurance. The lack of compensation and benefits causes many child care providers to report difficulty with food security, housing, or paying for utilities, causing many to hold an additional job to meet their basic needs. In fact, the early education workforce experiences a poverty rate 7.7 times higher than teachers in the K-8 system.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed the landscape of the nation's workforce, including that of the early learning system, resulting in an unprecedented closure of child care programs.

Mean hourly wages, by occupation, May 2021



Source *K-12 hourly salaries calculated based on a total of 2,080 hours worked.

CREATION
of a dedicated early childhood agency.

CONSOLIDATION
of existing programs and divisions into one state agency.

COLLABORATION
and **COORDINATION**
across different agencies.

Source

Already operating on razor thin margins, child care programs experienced financial turmoil, fluctuating and unpredictable demand, as well as costly new health and safety regulations. As these effects continued, many child care providers struggled to find qualified staff and stay in business. In 2021, a survey by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) found that 80 percent of child care providers reported experiencing staffing shortages. Retainment issues not only cause skilled, knowledgeable, and devoted educators to leave the field but also negatively impact children's social and academic progress. In 2023, the workforce shortage continues its efforts to recover from the fallout of the pandemic, as there are 54,900 less jobs in child care compared to February 2020.

An effective model of governance should create coherence, foster accountability and transparency, and improve quality and accessibility.

To sustain the early childhood care and education system, three rounds of Federal COVID-19 Relief Funds were awarded to states to help alleviate the financial burden centers and providers faced. These different forms of funding have helped with increased cost of operations, addressing workforce compensation, increasing reimbursement rates, and more. These supports are temporary; all relief funds must be expended by September 30, 2024 and Stabilization grant funds must be liquidated even sooner – by September 30, 2023. Thus, creating a concern for many providers as they work to sustain their businesses.

EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS GOVERNANCE

Early childhood governance refers to a state's organizational structure and its placement of authority and accountability for program, policy, financing, and implementation decisions for publicly funded early care and education for children from birth to age five.

Increasingly, states have sought to develop new governance structures that consolidate authority and oversight of programs and services into one office. Current systems of early learning governance are typically dispersed through multiple agencies and departments, often causing suboptimal messaging, effectiveness, and access by families.

State leaders and policymakers can help align agency mandates and goals and facilitate effective intergovernmental cooperation to increase and streamline quality, access, and delivery of early childhood services.

Three approaches to early childhood governance categorize the nuanced and complicated issue of existing early childhood governance structures:

01. Creation: A new executive branch agency or department within an agency is created to have the authority and accountability for the early learning system.
02. Consolidation: Places authority and accountability for the early childhood system in one executive branch agency for development, implementation and oversight of multiple early learning programs and services.
03. Coordination: Places authority and accountability for early learning programs and services across

multiple public agencies through a coordinated approach. This can be achieved in two ways:

a. Peer agency coordination
b. Coordination through Governor's Office

Within each of approach to governance, there is the opportunity for greater or lesser decentralization, empowering local communities or regions to initiate, implement, and monitor efforts. There is also the opportunity for states to support public-private partnerships, a mixed-delivery system, and flexibility to utilize partners to support oversight. Most importantly, the variety of governance structures provides the opportunity for each state to identify the approach best suited for their state's needs, children, and families.

Examples of state approaches to early childhood governance include:

Connecticut	The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood was created to improve the delivery of early childhood services for children in Connecticut. It's a distinct, cabinet-level agency, incorporating early childhood programs previously from the Departments of Education, Social Services, Board of Regents, Developmental Services, and Public Health.Governor Dannel P. Malloy signed Public Act 14-39 establishing the Office of Early Childhood on May 28, 2014.
Missouri	In January 2021, Governor Parson announced the consolidation of Missouri's key interagency early childhood programs into a single Office of Childhood. This consolidation integrates early learning, afterschool, home visiting, and child care into one office, housed in the state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The Hunt Institute, along with other partners, came together to develop recommendations for ongoing engagement with the Office of Childhood in an effort to ensure that the needs of the state's early and after care and education stakeholders are incorporated meaningfully within its decision-making processes.
Delaware	Delaware is in the process of consolidating a number of programs (including child care and early intervention services) into the Office of Early Learning at the Department of Education. Created in 2020, this new structure and consolidation is intended to improve efficiency and promote the alignment of eligibility, monitoring, and quality improvements. The Hunt Institute facilitated an Early Childhood Advisory Committee, chaired by Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long, who outlined 12 key actions that will provide the Office of Early Learning the strong footing required to continue strengthening Delaware in measures of program access and quality, child well-being, and educational attainment.
New Mexico	Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, on March 14, 2019, signed the bill that created a consolidated children's agency, the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) to house and oversee programs for young children previously spread across multiple agencies. These programs include the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Child Care Assistance, Child Care Regulatory and Oversight, Families FIRST (Perinatal Case Management), Family Infant Toddler (FIT) Program (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C), Head Start State Collaboration Office, Home Visiting, and New Mexico PreK (public school and community-based). The Hunt Institute facilitated a Transition Committee which was created to identify key priorities to support the Department's successful launch and initial 18-months of operation.

FINANCING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

Financing early childhood services typically includes the blending or braiding of federal, state, and private funding. Funding for early childhood care and education is available to states through various federally funded programs, including the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and Head Start. Federal dollars typically flow to the state through a designated state agency administering federal early childhood programs such as the Subsidized Child Care Assistance program. In other cases, federal dollars may pass directly to local providers of early childhood services, often seen in programs such as Head Start.

Many states have championed innovative funding streams to supplement the support and expansion of early childhood programs, such as lotteries, taxes, fees, tobacco settlements, children's trust funds, and public-private partnerships. Below are examples of the many financing options states have used to support young children and families.

General Fund Appropriations	States often use **general revenue funds** to match federal funding, as is required for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), or as a needed funding base to draw down federal funds. General revenue may also be used to go beyond required matching or Maintenance-of-Effort requirements in early childhood. Maine, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wisconsin, among others, use state appropriations for their state-sponsored pre-kindergarten programs.
Lotteries	States utilize **lotteries** as a popular way to fund education. Georgia has consistently used lottery proceeds to fund a universal preschool program.
Taxes	**Sales Taxes:** Several states have dedicated a portion of sales tax income to fund initiatives or programs for early care and education systems. South Carolina established preschool for at-risk four-year-old children via a one-cent increase in the state's sales tax in 1984. **Sin Taxes**: States also use taxes on goods considered either physically or morally harmful (such as alcohol, tobacco, and gambling) which generally do not require ongoing legislative approval. Colorado voters passed a tax on tobacco and vaping products in 2020 which is used, in part, to expand the state funded pre-kindergarten program. Virginia and Nevada use marijuana proceeds for early childhood education.

Tax Credits	A variety of tax credits exist to support early childhood education, including personal income tax credits, business income tax credits, and investment and incentive tax credits. **Personal income tax credits** are most often used for early childhood: Twenty-five states have a dependent care tax credit to help parents with the cost of child care. Louisiana established a School-Readiness Child Care Expense tax credit for taxpayers with children under the age of six who attend a child care facility that participates in the state's Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS). **Business income tax credits** are also available to support the early childhood system: Maine established tax credits for providers who spend funds to significantly improve the quality of care. States also utilize **investment or incentive tax credits**: The Oregon Child Care Investment tax credit was designed as an investment strategy that uses tax credits to generate private sector contributions to child care. The Oregon credits are marketed and sold to an investor. Invested funds are then drawn into a single pool that is used to help fund the child care industry. Eighteen states created an employer child care tax credit or employer tax incentive for child care that incentivizes employers to build child care supports for their employees.
Gambling or Related Fees	States have designated funds from gambling opportunities for early childhood: Louisiana's 2021 legislation dedicates 20 percent of **sports betting revenue** to early childhood education. Missouri uses a portion of **riverboat gambling fees** to fund early care and education services. Missouri considers these fees levied on gamblers and not gambling proceeds.
Tobacco Settlement Funds	The **Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement** was entered in November 1998. Several states use a portion of the state's share of the tobacco settlement to fund early care and education. Kentucky allotted 25 percent of its settlement, or $56 million over two years, in 2000, and continues to use tobacco settlement funds to support early learning.
Children's Trust Fund	**Children's Trust Funds** are used for child abuse and neglect prevention. However, states can also use these funds to support the overall early childhood system. The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund administers private funds from the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement to early childhood programs focused on child and family well-being. Maryland collects gambling fees that go into the Maryland Education Trust Fund to support pre-kindergarten programs as well as the K–12 system.
Public- Private Strategies	**Private resources** and expertise can be leveraged in many ways to increase the quality and availability of programs. Hawaii leveraged private resources with state and federal dollars to fund Learning to Grow, which provides statewide education outreach to families and license-exempt child care providers to support children. Minnesota raised $20 million in private funding to learn about and plan ways improve its early education system to set the foundation.

THE KANSAS CONTEXT

Kansas has a unique history of commitment to early childhood care and education, with roots reaching back nearly fifty years. But over the last decade, other states have accelerated their investment in this sector and led efforts to reimagine how better system alignment can deliver better results for children and families. In 1980, Kansas became the first state in the nation to establish a Children's Trust Fund. That trust fund was later transformed into the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) Fund and the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF), dedicating the state's annual payments from the Tobacco Master Settlement to these funds, with the intent to fund the delivery of early childhood services. At the same time, the Kansas Legislature established the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund to develop and implement a coordinated and comprehensive early childhood system, align interagency cooperation, and advise political leaders on early childhood investments and initiatives. Throughout this period, other state agencies like the Department for Children and Families, the Department of Health and Environment, and the Kansas State Department of Education also played key roles in developing the state's coordinated early childhood system.

Under this coordinated system of governance, these state agencies have clear, but siloed roles in delivering services. The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund is responsible for oversight of the Tobacco Master Settlement funds and serves as a convener of stakeholders and other state agencies. The Kansas State Department of Education administers the state's preschool programs and some parental education programs. The Kansas Department for Children and Families oversees of childhood quality programs, public assistance programs, and child welfare and foster care. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment is charged with protecting the public health, including early intervention screenings and services, child care licensing, and other health-related initiatives. The segmentation of these programs requires significant collaboration and coordination across state agency bureaucracies, which often leads to redundancies, inefficiencies, and barriers for children and families seeking state services.

Kansas' coordinated early childhood system requires significant collaboration across the sector, which has led the state to empanel many different governing groups to ensure seamless delivery of services. The state's efforts to build a comprehensive system is led by the State Directors Team comprised of the directors leading early childhood efforts at each of the four state agencies. These leaders meet regularly to implement innovation throughout our system, support service providers and families, and drive strategic planning for the early childhood sector. To assist in these efforts, the directors have tapped multiple teams of external support and stakeholders to inform decision making. Despite collective buy-in and a deep commitment to children and families, a system siloed like Kansas' will always face significant challenges and inefficiencies compared to those with a centralized decision-making authority that is accountable to families, political leaders, and communities. The Early Childhood Transition Task Force was created to propose solutions to this siloing of authority by develop a blueprint for unifying early childhood services into a one-stop shop for children, families, and communities.

The efforts of state leaders are guided by two touchstones that have been developed since Governor Kelly took office in 2019, and following the awarding of Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five funding from the federal government. Throughout 2019, the Kansas early childhood leaders embarked on an effort to thoroughly study the needs of Kansas families and communities and develop a strategic plan to guide the interagency delivery of services. Following deep engagement with over 6,100 Kansans, the state unveiled its *All in For Kansas Kids* Needs Assessment and Early Childhood Strategic Plan in early 2020.

The *All in For Kansas Kids* Needs Assessment identified two central messages:

01. Families' experiences are profoundly shaped by where they live across the state and within communities. Geography impacted the availability and accessibility of early care and education services and

supports, creating isolation and navigation barriers.

02. Too many young Kansas children grow up in families where basic needs are not met. The struggle to meet basic needs such as food, housing, and health care prevents families from fully meeting their child's developmental needs.

These central messages provide context and perspective to the eight key findings of the Needs Assessment, both of which are vital to understand the current landscape in Kansas and develop a strategic plan that strives both to address these needs and craft a vision for making Kansas the best place for children and families to thrive.

The Needs Assessment identified eight key findings:

01. Accessibility: Families with young children experience inequitable access to high-quality programs and services across the broader early childhood system.

02. Availability: Families with young children experience a gap between the services that are available and their actual needs, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations.

03. Navigation: Families must adopt a "connect the dots" approach to navigate services across sectors; disruptors are frequent and common.

04. Workforce: Early childhood workforce needs at both the leadership and direct service level include preparation, compensation/fiscal relief, ongoing training and support, and recruitment and retention.

05. Facilities: Needs exist related to the physical conditions and environments of early childhood facilities across the state.

06. Collaboration: Early childhood providers and stakeholders share a desire for collaboration and cooperation, but these efforts are often disconnected and uncoordinated.

07. Systems Alignment: Greater systems alignment is needed to fully realize an efficient and robust early childhood care and education infrastructure.

08. Bright Spots: Efficient, innovative, and responsive efforts are occurring among early childhood care and education system partners in communities throughout the state.

Of note, two of these key findings reinforce the mission and goal of the Early Childhood Transition Task Force and were bolstered through the extensive stakeholder engagement that the group undertook. The Needs Assessment documented that families are forced to "connect the dots" to navigate state services given the number of agencies engaging in this work, which creates disruptions and delays for families. Additionally, the Needs Assessment identified a need for greater systems alignment to deliver the efficient and robust early childhood system that is desired. **These two findings made it clear: Kansas' system suffers from internal alignment challenges that create redundancies and inefficiencies that make it more difficult for families and external stakeholders to navigate our coordinated early childhood system.**

Growing out of the 2020 Needs Assessment was the *All In For Kansas Kids* Early Childhood Strategic Plan, which outlined specific actions that Kansas could take to address the eight key findings previous identified. While a series of actions were proposed, the plan included specific strategies to address the state's internal governance alignment challenges with the goal of improving the experiences of families and communities. Specifically, the Strategic Plan suggested that the state:

01. Streamline state-level early childhood decision-making structures and processes.

02. Strengthen relationships between state agencies to inform and align policies, improve practices, and maximize resources.

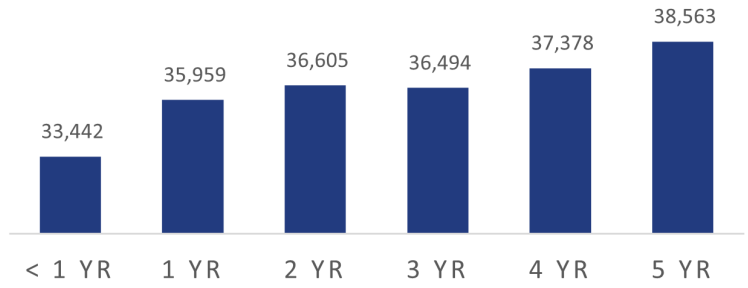
03. Implement an integrated set of tools and practices at the state level that support families and providers with connecting to the right service at the right time.

04. Measure the effectiveness and impact of early childhood care and education services over time and use this information to improve outcomes for children.

This Task Force's work builds off the *All in For Kansas Kids* Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan, supplementing a deeper dive into the challenges facing aligning our early childhood system's governance for the benefit of children and families. The efforts of the Task Force are directly tied to the needs identified over the course of the Governor's first term and the strategies developed to address those needs. The group has spent the better part of a year reviewing the navigation and systems alignment challenges, as well as how our current coordinated system of governance has contributed to significant barriers for families, providers, and communities. This report outlines how the state can improve these services by reforming our state-level early childhood system through the establishment of a single-authority that is fully accountable for early childhood issues, streamlines processes, reduces bureaucratic red tape, eliminates duplication across the system, and enhances our system to ensure its driven by what's best for children and families.

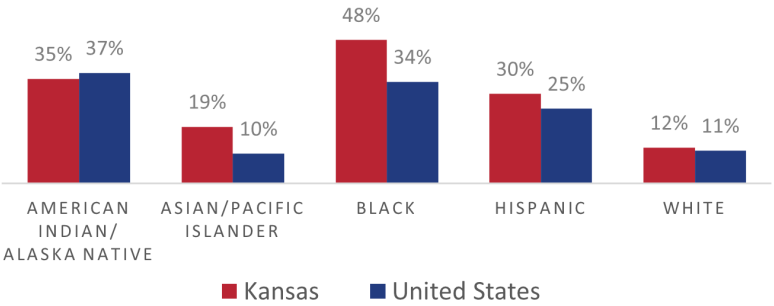
In order to get a sense of the needs of Kansas children and families, it is important first to understand the challenges they face - both demographically and as they seek to access services. Over the next several pages, readers will find current data related to both children and how well services are reaching the audiences for whom they are intended.

Number of Children Under Age 6 | 2021



Source

*Children Under Age 6 in Poverty by Race and Ethnicity | 2019**



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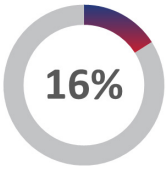
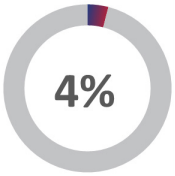
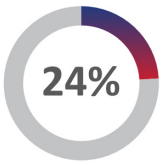


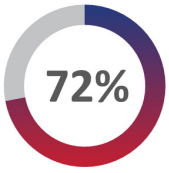
Children in Poverty*
Age 0–5 | 2021
Source



Children Experiencing Homelessness
Age 0–5 | 2018-2019
Source



Children in Low-Income Working Families**
Age 0–5 | 2019
Source



Children with All Available Parents in the Labor Force
Age 0–5 | 2021
Source

*In 2023, the Federal Poverty Level for a family of four was $30,000.

**Low-income is defined as having a family income less than twice the Federal Poverty Level.

Early Childhood Services

The federal government is the nation's primary funder of programs for children aged birth to five, with many states supplementing these investments to expand access to programs such as home visiting or child care subsidies as well as state-funded prekindergarten.

AGE 0-1	AGE 1	AGE 2	AGE 3	AGE 4	AGE 5
Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) Provides home visiting to families living in at-risk communities.					
Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Provides funding for licensing and quality of child care, ensuring parental choice in child care, supporting the child care workforce, and child care subsidy for low-income families.					
Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Provides funding for states to strengthen the early childhood system. *Awarded to selected states					
Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Block Grant Provides funding to support the health and well-being of all mothers, children, and families.					
Public Assistance Programs (TANF, WIC, SNAP, CHIP, Medicaid, Child Tax Credit)					
Early Head Start (EHS) Provides comprehensive services to low-income pregnant women, infants and toddlers, and their families.			**Head Start** Provides comprehensive services for low-income children ages three to compulsory school age, and their families.		
IDEA Part C Provides early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities.			**IDEA Part B, Section 619** Provides special education and related services to preschool children with disabilities.		

**Kansas was an initial recipient of a Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) and received a $4,482,305 award. The state also received a renewal grant of $8,943,000.*

Federal Expenditures

Child care and early learning services are most commonly underwritten through two federal programs: the **Child Care and Development Fund** (CCDF), a federal block grant that supports child care subsidies and quality enhancement initiatives, and **Head Start.** Compared to preschool programs for older children, the infant and toddler slots funded by these programs are typically available to fewer children.

$51,384,998
CCDF Allocations | 2022
Source

$79,968,282
Head Start Expenditures | 2022
**Includes all Head Start programs, including Early Head Start*
Source

$4,811,417
Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) | 2021

The federally-funded Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) supports states to provide voluntary, evidence-based home visiting services to women during pregnancy and to parents with young children up to kindergarten entry.

Source

Special Education

$6,137,925
IDEA Part C, Early Intervention for Infants and Toddlers | 2021

$6,717,083
IDEA Part B, Section 619 for Preschoolers with Disabilities | 2021

Source

COVID-19 Relief Funds

The federal government has provided three major funding relief packages to bolster child care and early education programs during the coronavirus pandemic through the Coronavirus, Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (March 2020), the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act (December 2020), and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act (March 2021).

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) has been the primary mechanism for distributing over $52 billion in relief funds to states and child care providers. Relief funds have been used to cover child care providers' general operating expenses, including fixed costs and increased operating expenses, such as cleaning and sanitation expenses; staff wages, benefits, and bonuses; assistance for families; and past expenses incurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Coronavirus Supplemental Appropriations to the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) in Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021 and Total Spending as of April 2023

ACT		Appropriation to CCDF (billions)	Estimated total spending of April 2023 (billions)	Spending deadline
Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (2020)		$3.5	$3.3	Sept. 30, 2023
Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2001 (CRRSA)		$10.0	$8.0	Sept. 30, 2023
American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA)	Child care stabalization funds	$24.0	$19.9	Sept. 30, 2023
	Supplemental CCDF funds	$15.0	$3.3	Sept. 30, 2024
*TOTAL		$52.5	$34.5	

Source

Most recently, the ARPA allocated $39 billion in child care relief funding, including $24 billion for stabilization grants for child care providers to remain open or reopen, and $25 billion for states to spend on allowable CCDBG activities to make child care more affordable and accessible. State Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) plans include how states plan to allocate ARP Act funds. CCDF state plans for the 2022-2024 fiscal years have been approved.

- Child Care Relief Funding: Timeline & Deadlines | First Five Years Fund (FFYF)
- Strategies to Guide the Equitable Allocation | Child Trends state strategies to address equity in allocating ARPA child care funds.
- U.S. Government Accountability Office | Recent Study on Child Care Subsidy Eligibility and Utilization

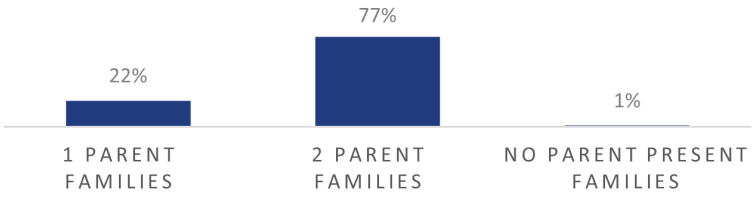
**Note that the figures above reflect total congressional appropriations to the states. These are not state-specific figures.*

Meeting the Needs of Families

Family Structure

Family structure is strongly associated with children's chances of growing up in poverty, academic success, and future mental health outcomes. Household disruptions can lead to adverse experiences impacting child outcomes. However, children are more likely to achieve optimal developmental growth in any family structure with the assistance of protective factors.

FAMILY STRUCTURE IN KANSAS | 2022*



Source

Children Age 0-1 in Foster Care | 2021

345

Children Age 1-5 in Foster Care | 2021

2,070

Source

Family Supports

To best support children in their earliest years, vulnerable families need access to information and services related to nutrition, health care, and other programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

92,163

Number of Households Participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) | 2023

Source

45,525

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Participants | 2023

Source

434,716

Number of Children Enrolled in MEDICAID | 2023

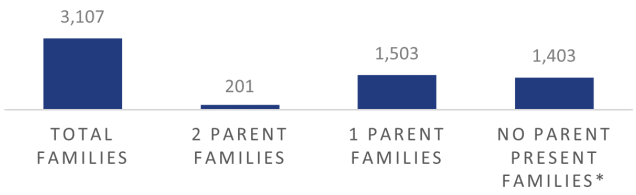
Source

68,554

Number of Children Enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) | 2023

Source

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Enrollment | 2022



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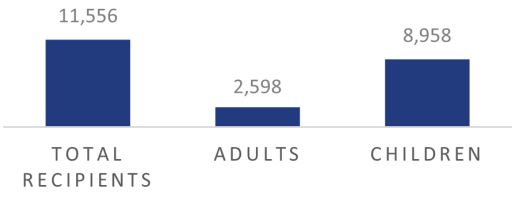


** Children in households with no parent present are in care of grandparents, other relatives, unrelated foster parents, or in group homes.*

Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant

The federal government allocates the Title V Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Services Block Grant to states to support the health and well-being of all mothers, children, and families. States must provide a match to federal funding.

MCH FUNDS BY SOURCE | 2021

Source

POPULATION SERVED	INDIVIDUALS SERVED
Pregnant Women	28,950
Infants	36,985
Children (Age 1-21)	677,041
Children with Special Needs	145,208
Others (women and men, over 21)	53,149
Total	941,333

Source

Funds from the Title V MCH Block Grant help:

- Assure access to quality maternal and child health care services to mothers and children, especially those with low incomes or limited availability of care
- Reduce infant mortality
- Provide access to prenatal, delivery, and postnatal care to women, especially pregnant women who are low income and at-risk
- Increase regular screenings and follow-up diagnostic and treatment services for children who are low income
- Provide access to preventive and primary care services for children who are low income and rehabilitative services for children with special health needs
- Implement family-centered, community-based, systems of coordinated care for children with special health care needs
- Set up toll-free hotlines and assistance with applying for services to pregnant women with infants and children eligible for Medicaid

Kansas has prioritized the following National Performance Measures:

- **Well-Woman Visit**
- **Safe Sleep**
- **Developmental Screening**
- **Adolescent Well-Visit**
- **Transition**

Home Visiting

Home visiting is a type of service targeted towards expectant parents and families with children ages birth to five to support healthy child development. Though models and programs vary, home visits typically allow trained experts to provide services, share best practices, and connect families to other resources, all within the home setting. Research (1, 2, 3) has shown that home visiting services contribute to reduced child maltreatment, which is most likely to occur in the first year of a child's life.

7,506
Number of Families Served

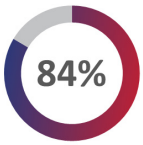
Number of Home Visits
70,366

Home Visiting Models
Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-Up, Early Head Start Home-Based Option, Healthy Families America, Nurse-Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, and Play and Learning Strategies

Source

Prenatal Care

Receiving appropriate prenatal care helps reduce the likelihood of negative birth outcomes, including low birthweight and premature births, which are linked to developmental delays. Furthermore, births to teen mothers increase risk for both children (increased likelihood of infant mortality and being born at a low birthweight) and their mothers (decreased likelihood of graduating from high school and maintaining steady employment). These outcomes often vary significantly across demographic groups, resulting in systemic inequities in infant and maternal health and well-being.

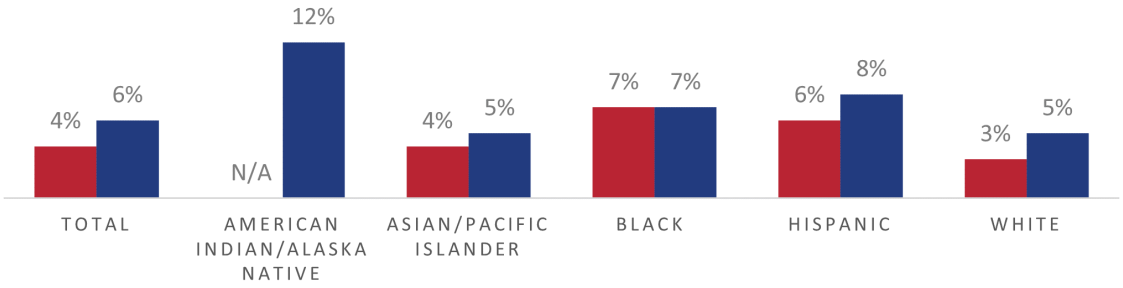


Appropriate Prenatal Care

Percentage of infants who were born to mothers receiving consistent prenatal care, beginning in the first trimester of pregnancy.

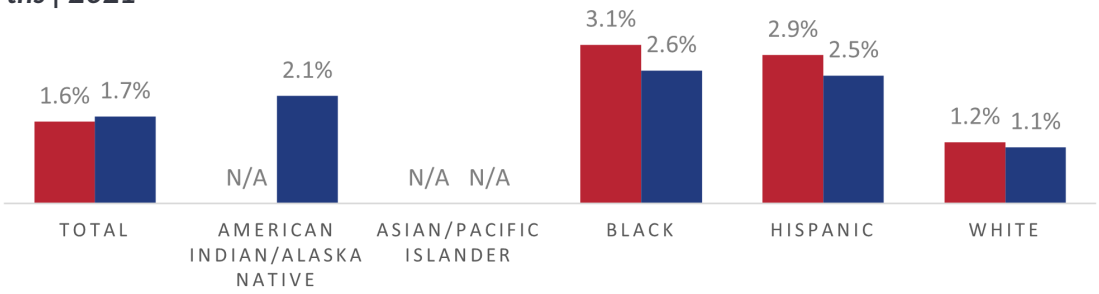
Source

Births to women receiving late or no prenatal care | 2021



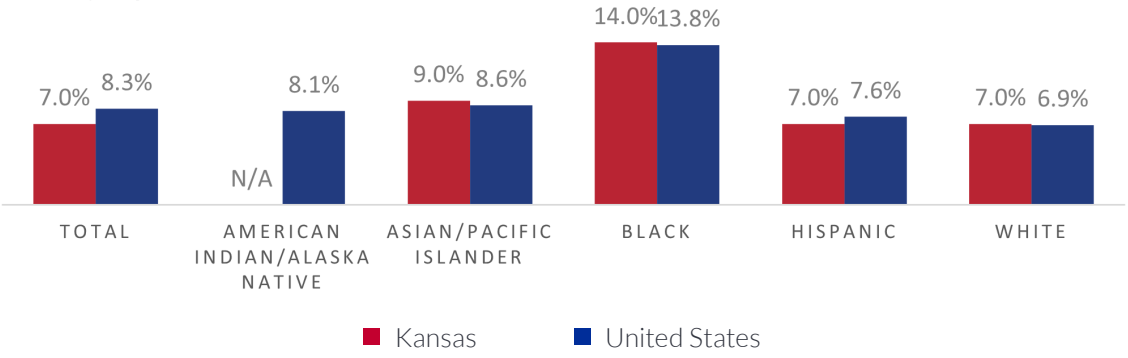
Source

Teen Births | 2021



Source

Low Birthweight | 2021



Source

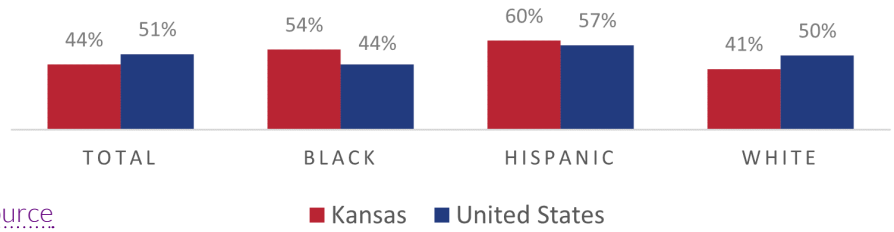
Child Care

Most children under age six in the United States live with employed parents. As a result, many American families require nonparental early care and education. However, eight out of 10 parents report serious issues in accessing affordable, high-quality child care.

Child Care Access

A child care desert is an area with little or no access to quality child care or, more specifically, an area with three times as many children, aged five and under, as **licensed** child care slots. Not included are family, friend, or neighbor care, which is a common child care arrangement for families.

Percent of People Living in Child Care Deserts | 2018



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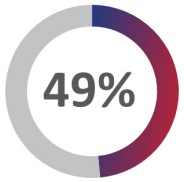
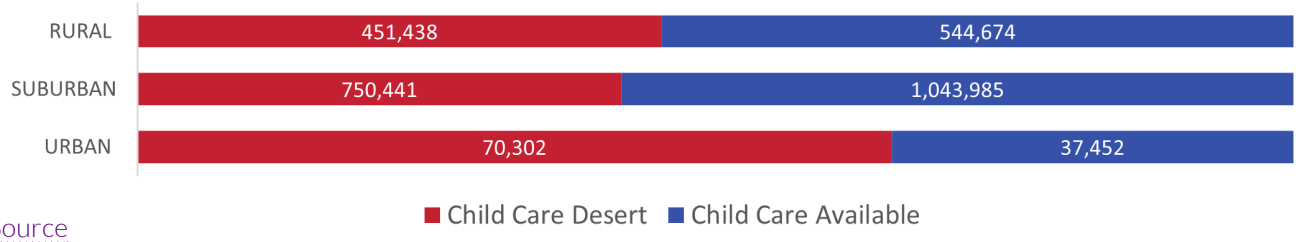


Children Receiving at Least 10 Hours of Child Care per Week | 2020

Source

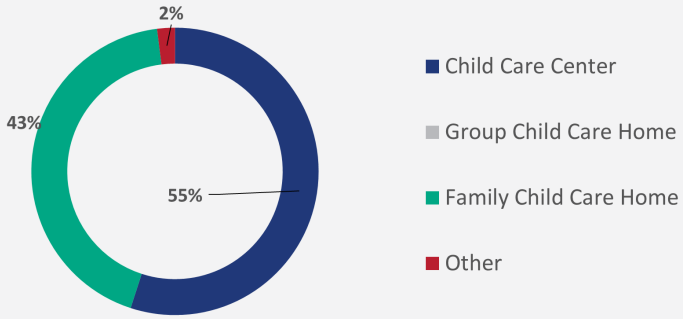
Number of People Living in Child Care Deserts | 2018



Source

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)

Children Receiving Subsidized Child Care Assistance by Type of Care | 2020



Source

11,700

Average Number of Children (All Ages) Receiving Child Care Subsidy Monthly | 2020

Source

Early Care and Education for Children Ages Birth to Three

Affordability of Infant Care

Licensed child care is delivered through center-based programs and family child care homes. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, child care is affordable if it costs no more than seven percent of a family's income. There are efforts underway in some states to ensure costs for families receiving subsidized child care are capped at this level.

Average Annual Cost of Infant Care | 2021

$15,540

Source

Cost of Infant Care as a Share of Median Family Income | 2020

15%

Source

Percentage of Families That Can Afford Infant Care (7% of family income) | 2020

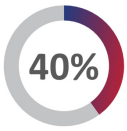
8%

Source

The first three years of life are a unique and critical period of development, during which up to one million new neural connections are formed in the developing brain each second. Infants and toddlers develop and learn at exponential rates as they explore and engage with the environments and adults around them. To best support their **health and development**, families need access to evidence-based parenting education, supports, and services.

Early Intervention

Early intervention is a set of services provided to the families of infants and toddlers with diagnosed disabilities and/or developmental delays. Research suggests that early identification and remediation can, in many cases, support children in altering their developmental trajectories-minimizing the need for long-term special education supports.



Developmental Screening | 2021-2022

Percentage of children ages 9 to 35 months who received a screening

Source

Number of Children Ages 0-2 Served by Early Head Start | 2022

1,556

Source

Early Intervention | 2020-2022

Children birth to 36 months who received early intervention services through Part C of IDEA

10,186

Source

Early Care and Education for Children Ages Three To Five

By age three or four, children may become eligible to enroll (voluntarily) in one or more types of publicly-funded pre-kindergarten. This includes state-funded pre-K, often delivered in both public and private settings, and Head Start, a federally-funded preschool program operated by local grantees.

3- to 5-Year-Old Children Enrolled in Head Start | 2022

4,753

Source

Average Annual Price of Child Care for a 4-Year-Old | 2021

$9,252

Source

3- to 4-Year-Old Children Enrolled in State Funded Preschool Program | 2021

20148

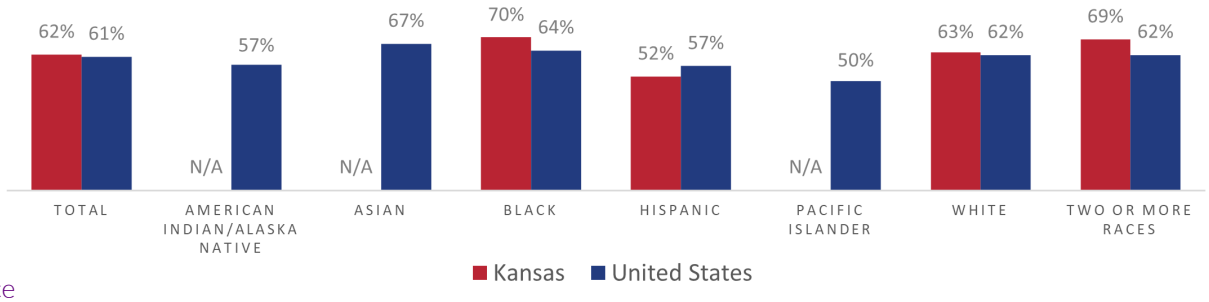
Source

3- to 5-Year-Old Children Receiving Special Education Services through Part B, Section 619 of IDEA | 2021-2022

7,808

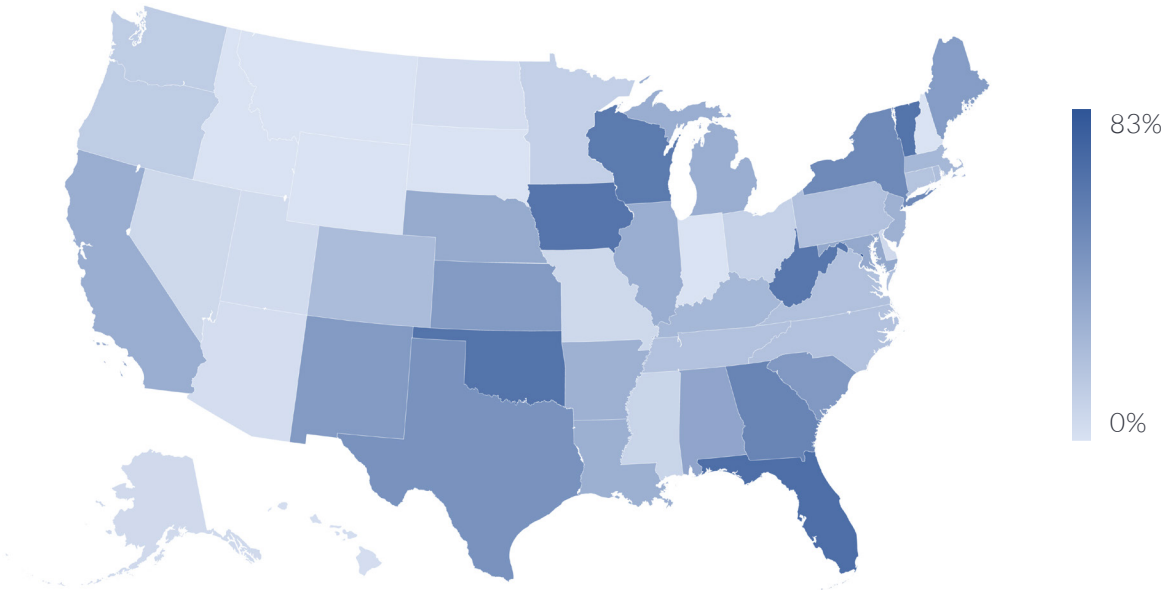
Source

PERCENTAGE OF 3- TO 5-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN ENROLLED IN A PRE-K PROGRAM, BY RACE AND ETHNICITY | 2019



Source

PERCENTAGE OF FOUR-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN ENROLLED IN STATE PRE-K | 2022



Source

SECTION TWO: THE KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION TASK FORCE

Executive Order 23-01

As the first official act of her second term, Governor Laura Kelly issued Executive Order 23-01 which established the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force. Joined by her own granddaughter, Governor Kelly signed the executive order on January 10, 2023, surrounded by families, early childhood educators and providers, members of the Kansas legislature, and business representatives. In her remarks, the Governor stated, "In my second term, I remain committed to ensuring that all children in Kansas have access to the critical services and programs they need for healthy development, and that all families seeking those services have an equal opportunity to take advantage of them. That's what we're aiming to achieve with this declaration. Starting our kids off on the right foot early in life is the best investment we can make, and will create a stronger, more prosperous Kansas for generations to come."

In issuing Executive Order 23-01, Governor Kelly recognized a need to review the current delivery of early childhood and study the merits of unifying early childhood services, which are currently administered by four different state entities, under one state agency. The Task Force was charged with leading this review and creating a framework for what the unification of these services would look it.

Executive Order 23-01 outlines a series of specific guidelines and deliverables for the Task Force to accomplish prior to submitting its final report to the Governor. First, the Executive Order provides a vision statement to guide the work: "All Kansas children—especially those between zero and five years of age—deserve healthy childhoods that are supported by a robust early childhood system which improves outcomes and effectively providers high-quality early care and education, adapts to the needs of families and communities, and is equitably accessible to all communities across the state."

The Executive Order then outlines a series of principles that should underpin the Task Force's work and recommendations. A few of those principles include:

- Children, family, and community well-being shall be centered throughout the Task Force's work;
- Efforts shall be focused on maximizing efficiencies to reduce administrative burdens on families and improve access to early childhood service;
- Access to programs and services shall be equitable and available to all children and families—regardless of socio-economic status or geographic location;
- Work shall focus on strengthening and expanding the mixed-delivery system already in use in Kansas;
- While focusing on advancing our delivery system, work shall highlight the importance of defining quality care and expanding capacity and access to create a greater quantity of quality services;
- To incentivize innovation and respond to family need, communities must be empowered to develop local, community-based solutions that take a whole-child and whole-family approach in responding to need;
- Strengthening early childhood developmental health is vital to ensuring that children are prepared to achieve academic success and are setup for lifelong learning.

To achieve its charge, the Task Force was specifically tasked with distinct deliverables, including:

- A landscape analysis of the current early childhood delivery system that outlines how the system is financed, where programs are housed, and what inefficiencies occur because of the current administrative structure.
- A comprehensive stakeholder engagement process that allows everyday Kansans to share their feedback and experiences with the current delivery system, provide insight on the needs of families and communities, and uplift local examples of success.

- A transition plan that outlines possible programs for unification, provides a timeline and process for moving program under one roof, and generates goals and metrics for the state to strive towards—all while ensuring continuous operation of state services upon the unification of early childhood services.

Following the enactment of Executive Order 23-01, Governor Kelly identified and appointed a slate of members to lead the Task Force's work. Those appointments were announced in February 2023 and the Task Force began its work the following month.

Membership

Seated in early February 2023, Governor Laura Kelly appointed the membership to the Early Childhood Transition Task Force. Executive Order 23-01 outlined specific criteria for the appointment of the Task Force's members. To lead the work, the Governor appointed Cornelia Stevens and Sam Huenergardt as co-chairs to provide strategic direction for the group and lead the meetings. She also appointed an honorary chair, Barry Downing, CEO of Northrock Inc., to honor his longstanding advocacy for early education and his legacy of philanthropy that has provided thousands of Kansas children with more opportunities to grow and develop the tools for lifelong success.

The Executive Order directed the Governor to provide appointments to represent five major state entities: the Kansas Department for Children and Families, the Kansas Department for Health and Environment, the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, the Kansas State Department of Education, and the Kansas Department of Commerce. These agencies were chosen to provide robust representation of those state government entities essential to the creation of a high-quality early childhood care and education system. For the remaining appointments, the Governor selected representatives from a multitude of backgrounds to provide additional insight to the Task Force work. These sectors included: businesses and chambers of commerce, philanthropic organizations, early childhood service providers or industry organizations, and advocacy organizations. To be collaborative with the Legislature, the Governor also appointed a bipartisan group of members from the Kansas House of Representatives and the Kansas Senate. A subsequent executive order, Executive Order 23-02, provided the Governor with authority to appoint additional members to the Task Force.

Concurrently, the Governor announced that The Hunt Institute, a nonpartisan education policy resource to the nation's governors and state lawmakers, would serve as the primary staffing support for the group and bring its national expertise on early childhood care and education to assist the group's review of Kansas' system.

Member of Task Force include:

- **Cornelia Stevens, Co-Chair (Wichita)**—Executive Director, TOP Early Learning Centers
- **Sam Huenergardt, Co-Chair (Shawnee)**—CEO Mid-American Region, AdventHealth
- **Secretary Laura Howard (Topeka)**—Kansas Department for Children and Families
- **Secretary Janet Stanek (Topeka)**—Kansas Department of Health and Environment
- **Melissa Rooker (Fairway)**—Executive Director, Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund
- **Amanda Petersen (Lawrence)**—Director of Early Childhood, Kansas State Department of Education
- **Sara Bloom (Hays)**—Community Development Specialist, Kansas Department of Commerce
- **Lona Duvall (Garden City)**—President, Finney County Economic Development Corporation
- **Heather Schrotberger (Overland Park)**—Executive Director, Kansas Head Start Association
- **David Jordan (Hutchinson)**—President and CEO, United Methodist Health Ministry Fund
- **Betsy Wearing (Salina)**—Coordinator of Communications, Programs and New Initiatives, Dane G. Hansen Foundation
- **Kelly Davydov (Overland Park)**—Executive Director, Child Care Aware of Kansas
- **Monica Murnan (Pittsburg)**—Director of Community Support Services, Greenbush/Chair, Kansas Action for Children

- **Sen. Molly Baumgardner (Louisburg)**—Senate District 37
- **Sen. Brenda Dietrich (Topeka)**—Senate District 20
- **Sen. Pat Pettey (Kansas City)**—Senate District 6
- **Rep. Susan Ruiz (Shawnee)**—House District 23
- **Rep. Troy Waymaster (Bunker Hill)**—House District 109
- **Honorary Chair: Barry Downing (Wichita)**—President, Northrock Inc.

Overview of Meetings

Following the official appointment of the Task Force in February 2023, the group began preparations of a series of five official meetings over the course of the year. With the support of The Hunt Institute, the Task Force set out for a year of intensive review of the early childhood system and engagement with Kansans from every corner of the state.

The Task Force met five times, each with a specific focus tied to the group's charge in Executive Order 23-01, and conducted a weeklong community engagement tour. Following the community engagement tour, the Task Force began synthesizing the lessons and feedback it had received throughout the first half of the year to create formal recommendations for the unification of services. To achieve comprehensive recommendations that met the charge outlined in the executive order, the Task Force appointed three working groups to meet virtually between formal Task Force meetings to develop draft recommendations. These work groups focused on three different topics: programmatic movements, transition logistics, and data and metrics. These groups worked to draft initial recommendations which were later approved by the full Task Force and included in this report.

The meetings of the Task Force occurred as follows:

- Meeting 1: The Kansas Early Childhood Landscape (March 2023)
- Meeting 2: Lessons from Other States (May 2023)
- Community Engagement Tour (June 2023)
- Meeting 3: Work Session and Review of Stakeholder Feedback (August 2023)
- Work Group Sessions (August-October 2023)
- Meeting 4: Review and Refinement of Draft Report (October 2023)
- Meeting 5: Presentation of Final Report (December 2023)

MEETING ONE: THE KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD LANDSCAPE (MARCH 31, 2023)

Executive Order 23-01 not only established the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force, but detailed the broad parameters of its work, beginning with a requirement that the Task Force conduct **"an analysis of the current early childhood service delivery system in Kansas and how it is financed – with a specific focused on gaps, inefficiencies, and redundancies."**

In an effort to jumpstart this complex process, The Hunt Institute worked alongside staff from the Kelly Administration, the four major child serving entities and Task Force co-chairs Cornelia Stevens and Sam Huenergardt to develop a written process for inventorying the state's early childhood program offerings.

A template was subsequently provided to the agencies, asking them to inventory (in advance of the Task Force's first meeting on March 31, 2023) the programs under their purviews, to include a brief description of each, alongside data on their funding and funding type, number of clients served, current levels of staffing, enabling authority, and potential gaps, inefficiencies, and opportunities for reform.

The result was an 81-page written inventory (see appendix for abridged inventory) detailing 50 distinct early childhood program offerings spread across these four major units of government. This document was distributed to Task Force members in advance of Meeting 1 and was the primary focus of the group's first meeting. While a more detailed description of these programs can be found in the written inventory, state agencies highlighted the following programs as requiring significant coordination and collaboration across agency or as a possible duplication of services:

STATE ENTITY	HIGHLIGHTED PROGRAMS
Kansas State Department of Education	Kansas Parent as Teachers Preschool-Aged At-Risk Kansas Preschool Pilot Interagency Coordinating Councils Child and Adult Care Food Program
Kansas Children's Cabinet & Trust Fund	CIF Grants (Early Childhood Block Grants) Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Preschool Development Grants Workforce Registry
Kansas Department for Children and Families	Childcare Assistance Childcare Quality Head Start Collaboration Office and Early Head Start Various home visiting programs
Kansas Department for Health and Environment	Childcare Licensing Early Childhood Developmental Services Newborn Screening Program Supplemental Nutrition Program (WIC) Title V Services Various home visiting programs

Following an opening charge to the group from Governor Kelly and process overview from The Hunt Institute, 30 minutes apiece were allocated to the Kansas State Department of Education, the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, the Kansas Department for Children and Families, and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to provide an overview of their agency offerings, reflections on the prospect of a streamlined governance structure and opportunities for reform.

Through their presentations, each entity identified the following challenges, inefficiencies, and gaps in the current system:

STATE ENTITY	CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED
Kansas State Department of Education	Need to improve coordination and delivery of home visiting/parent education services across models. Streamline funding mechanisms, especially for programs that receive funds from multiple sources. Required coordination between school district, state agencies, and other service providers to deliver childcare, preschool, and Head Start services. Coordination between state agencies required to provide and fund services, especially for federally funded programs and programs that serve overlapping populations.
Kansas Children's Cabinet & Trust Fund	Need for a single steward of the early childhood system. No formal decision-making authority across all-state agencies. Need to align and direct funding and programmatic investments to address full needs of the mixed delivery system. Lack of contractual alignment for professional development, technical assistance, and evaluation that is baked into procurement processes. Need to improve coordination and navigation between state/local needs and federal guidelines. Need to bolster supports for all early childhood workers across the mixed delivery system. Need to modernize state data infrastructure and rapid response to integrated data requests. Need for a modernized and consolidated data system that eases community and program reporting burdens and equips decision-makers.
Kansas Department for Children and Families	Lack of single access point for families seeking care. Lack of streamlined access and support for childcare providers Lack of common referral structure. Inconsistent state-level marketing and public outreach. Need to build capacity for universal home visiting. Need to advance common goals and best practices for age exclusive sets of 0-3 and 0-5 by blending and leveraging these age groups. Optimizing funding streams towards common goals. Need to better leverage federal CCDF funds. Need for streamlined administrative and reporting procedures.

■ Kansas Department for Health and Environment	■ Need for streamlined funding processes to better address the challenges of funding individual programs from multiple sources. ■ Public confusion over which state agencies lead on specific programs or services. ■ Inadequate and outdated information technology and data systems. ■ Complicated process of regulating facilities on state and local level with multiple governmental entities involved in ensuring compliance.

While these level-setting presentations to the Task Force left limited time for group discussion, the group's closing conversation (and written inventory) highlighted the immense complexity of the state's existing system and uplifted at least one practical example of systemic inefficiency – home visiting programs – in which each of the four departments appear to have some active connection as either a funder or direct service provider, resulting in what one Task Force member noted are complex and duplicative reporting requirements for programs being supported by multiple public revenue sources.

MEETING TWO: LESSONS FROM OTHER STATES (MAY 16, 2023)

In addition to requiring the Task Force to assess the state's existing early childhood landscape, Executive Order 23-01 directs the group to consider lessons learned from other states that have already taken steps to consolidate early childhood system governance under a single agency approach like that being contemplated by Kansas. This was the focus of the group's second in-person meeting, held May 16, 2023. After receiving a brief opening presentation by 2020 National Teacher of the Year, Kansas' Tabatha Rosproy (who holds the distinction of being the first and only prekindergarten teacher to be honored with this title), the group received presentations from a pair of sister states, Missouri (Dr. Pam Thomas, Assistant Commissioner, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) and Colorado (Dr. Lisa Roy, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Early Childhood and Michael Cooke, Early Childhood Transition Director), both of which have recently launched consolidated structures.

In advance of the meeting, Task Force members received a side-by-side comparison detailing the different approaches taken by the two states. An abridged summary of that side-by-side comparison, including Kansas' system, is included here:

Among the key lessons spotlighted by invited resource experts were:

- **Timeline and Transition Staffing:** Consolidating governmental services is a complex and labor-intensive process that requires a carefully planned transition. It involves not only the thoughtful integration of programs, but consideration of how and where program data is collected and stored, how these programs are made accessible to the public, and the blending of multiple agency cultures – even as the programs being transitioned must remain functional and accessible throughout the transition period.

Logistically, the consolidation of staff into a single agency presents challenges related to payroll and human resources, information technology, the co-location of staff, and more. While none of these challenges is insurmountable, the identification of a reasonable transition timeline and dedicated staff charged with overseeing the transition is critical. In Colorado, an early childhood transition director was hired (on a time-limited basis) within the governor's office and charged with overseeing the process, before handing off to the functional agency's new executive director. In Missouri, an existing leader within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education was tapped both to oversee the transition and lead the new division.

Some states planning single agency consolidation processes (Oregon) have sought legislative approval to extend the initial timeline. Participants emphasized

	MISSOURI OFFICE OF CHILDHOOD	COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD	KANSAS COORDINATED EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM
Method of Creation	Executive Order 21-02	HB 21-1304 (Legislation)	Executive Reorganization Orders, Constitutional Amendments, and Legislation
Organizational Structure	Consolidation into an existing state agency: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	Creation of a new cabinet agency: Colorado Department of Early Childhood	Coordinated system between Kansas State Department of Education, Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, Kansas Department for Children and Families, and Kansas Department of Health and Environment
Leadership	Assistant Commissioner	Executive Director	Commissioner of Education, Children's Cabinet members and Executive Director, and Cabinet Secretaries
Governance	Assistant Commissioner reports to the Commissioner of Education (appointed by the Governor) and the State Board of Education (appointed by the Governor and confirmed by Senate)	Executive Director is a cabinet-level position appointed by and reporting to the Governor	Commissioner of Education is appointed by the State Board of Education (who are popularly elected); Executive Director is hired as a state employee, Cabinet Secretaries are appointed by the Governor, confirmed by the Senate, and serve at the Governor's pleasure
Creation Timeline	Executive Order 21-02 was issued on January 28, 2021, establishing the Office of Childhood with an effective/operational date of August 28, 2021 (7 month ramp up period). Office integration efforts began April 1, 2021. This integration was completed on August 13, 2021.	HB 21-1304 was signed into law by Governor Jared Polis on June 23, 2021. The law established an effective/operational date of July 1, 2022 (1 year ramp up period). A subsequent bill, HB 22-1197 advanced the agency's start date to March 1, 2022, to allow for the hiring of key staff in advance of the July 1 "go-live" date. An interagency agreement with the CO Department of Human Services covers several administrative processes including payroll and invoicing, that weren't ready to transition when CDEC launched. This agreement will end on September 30, 2023.	Article 6 of the Kansas Constitution establishes the role of the Kansas State Board of Education. A State Department of Education was first created in 1915. The Kansas legislature authorized school districts to administer preschool programs in 1965 and parent education programs in 1990. The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund was first created in 1980, dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. In 1999, the Kansas legislature established the Cabinet by statute to oversee expenditures from the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement. The Kansas Department for Children and Families was first established within the former Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services in 1973. Following restructuring the current Department for Children and Families was established in 2012. Since its inception, the Department has had oversight of childhood initiatives, public assistance programs, and child welfare. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment was created in 1974, charged with protecting the health "of all Kansans." The agency oversees childcare licensing, which was first authorized by the Kansas legislature in 1919. The licensing program at KDHE was strengthened in 2010 with the passage of "Lexie's Law."

that it is more important that services and payments flow seamlessly to families and providers than it is to meet an arbitrary transition deadline.

- **Transparently engage key stakeholders in the process:** Because the primary rationale for consolidation is often an improved experience for children, families, and providers, it is important to use the transition planning process to hear directly from key stakeholders about their past/current experiences within the system and how a consolidated structure might lend itself to greater efficiency In Missouri, the Parson administration arranged for both a stakeholder advisory committee and focus groups – both facilitated by The Hunt Institute – to gather these insights and plan for the Office of Childhood's ongoing engagement with key audiences.
- **Take time to involve all consolidated programs in the change management process:** Ultimately the proposed process will entail a complex business merger. In addition to gathering external stakeholder feedback, the thoughtful inclusion of transferring program staff is critical to a successful transition.

Transitions of this sort, while highly beneficial, naturally create a level of unease and anxiety among staff who may find themselves not only within a new agency, but with differing levels of authority, new supervisors, and expectations to reconsider and change what may be longstanding program policies in which they may have personal investment/pride in authorship. Successfully launching a consolidated agency will require not only time, but the identification of dynamic and skillful leaders, sensitive to the fact that their first measure of success will be blending multiple agency cultures into a seamless, unified system in which **all** decisions must support the needs of Kansas children and families.

- **Ensuring adequate budgeting for needed staff positions:** In theory, the creation of a new organizational structure to house existing government programs should not entail extensive new cost, as the resources used to support these programs already exist and should transfer with them. In practice, however, it can be difficult to disentangle and reallocate all resources used to support these programs within their current administrative homes. While program staff are easily identified for transfer, it is important to also consider all of the administrative and infrastructure supports that enable these programs - which range from human resources and IT, to payroll, accounts payable/receivable and more. A well-considered transition plan will ensure the transfer of both the programmatic and administrative resources necessary to ensure success of the new agency, while likewise considering the remaining needs of the agencies from which these programs will be transferred. Although a carefully crafted plan should minimize new costs, startup agencies routinely require some level of new/additional funding to ensure full staffing and a successful launch.
- **Ensure intentional and consistent communication, both internally and externally:** Whether with internal or external stakeholders, intentional and consistent communication is key to building trust and should be prioritized throughout the transition process (and beyond).
- **Data systems are critical:** Among the most challenging aspects of program integration is the alignment of data collection systems. Due, in part, to the wide array of local, state, and federal revenue streams supporting the nation's early childhood programs, many utilize siloed data collection systems, incapable of connecting with one another. Investment in a unified data collection system to house all new agency data is well-advised but can be both costly and time-consuming. This is an issue to begin exploring sooner, rather than later as the state considers reform.
- **Carefully analyze federal requirements and funding streams:** One factor that often prevents meaningful systems reform is a general sense that "things can't be done differently, because the feds require it this way." This is often not the case, with federal regulations providing significantly more flexibility to the states than sometimes acknowledged – and federal agencies routinely working with states to identify innovative solutions. Careful analysis of federal programmatic and funding requirements can create opportunities to "blend and braid" funding streams, resulting in both greater program access and more optimal use

of taxpayer resources. Use the transition process to reexamine old ways of thinking and consider new possibilities.

- **Determine metrics to evaluate efficiency and effectiveness of consolidated system:** One challenge identified through conversations with Missouri and Colorado was the difficulty in determining and setting metrics for a "successful" consolidated early childhood system. Critical analysis of state-level consolidation is essential to ensuring that families, communities, and service providers are navigating a new system with greater ease because most states have been motivated to consolidated systems based on feedback that communities have experienced significant difficulty working through siloed or fragmented processes. New or consolidated agencies must find ways to ensure that transformations of early childhood systems are having their intended effect—increasing efficiency, creating a return on investment, and delivering improved outcomes for the populations they serve. Determining the metrics and evaluating those systems has proven difficult given many states do not have a baseline to operate from and cannot fully compare changes caused by the consolidation of services.

Community Engagment Tour (June 27-30, 2023)

In accordance with the requirements set out by Executive Order 23-01, and as recommended by sister state leaders, the Early Childhood Transition Task Force recently held listening sessions designed to engage community stakeholders. Over the course of four days, the Task Force hosted regional meetings in 9 Kansas communities (Chanute, Wichita, Garden City, Hays, Salina, Manhattan, Topeka, Overland Park, and Kansas City). Each session began with a short overview of the Task Force's work and charge, then transitioned participants into facilitated small group discussions centered around a set of three guiding questions:

- **What challenges, gaps, or barriers have you and your community faced while navigating the early childhood system? What are the greatest needs you and your community are facing?**
- **What services and programs are currently working on the local level and serve as bright spots for progress in supporting young children and families? What innovation is occurring in your community that could become models for practice in other regions and statewide?**
- **How would you evaluate the state's efficiency in providing support to you and your community in the early childhood sector? How has the State of Kansas—and the programs it operates—contributed to your successes and challenges? (For example, how has the state's operation of childcare licensing, home visiting, childcare subsidy, or other programs impacted your experience navigating the system?)**

Notetakers in each small group captured stakeholder feedback. Participants were also provided with note cards – and a contact address at The Hunt Institute - through which to share additional perspectives.

Following small group discussion of these three questions, participants shared summaries of their discussions and responses. A full accounting of the findings from the stakeholder engagement tour can be found in the subsequent section of this report. In total, around 500 Kansans joined the Task Force during the tour, each providing critical feedback used to generate the group's recommendations and this final report.

The community engagement tour made clear that the current systems and structures are "inadequate to meet the needs of Kansas children and families." Participants identified challenges such as inefficiencies with the system, low wages and high costs for care, and workforce recruitment. Kansans identified affordability, access, system navigation as key areas needing improvement. Kansans also celebrated the private sector's eagerness to create public-private partnerships and local innovation to solve challenges.

MEETING THREE: WORK SESSION AND REVIEW OF STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK (AUGUST 17, 2023)

During Meeting Three, the Task Force received an overview of the statewide Community Engagement Tour from the University of Kansas' Center for Public Partnerships and Research and engaged in whole group discussion around four guiding questions:

- What are your greatest concerns about moving forward with a single, cabinet agency concept? What might be done proactively to address them?
- Are there specific programs that should or should not be moved in your estimation? Why should they be included/omitted?
- What are the metrics by which we should measure the success of a transition for children and families?
- On what timeline would such a transition be feasible? How should the transition process be staffed? What systems would need to be ready and "live" on day one to ensure a seamless transition for families, service providers, and staff?

Recognizing that the group's meeting time itself was insufficient to answer each of these questions in sufficient detail to inform the final report, three virtual work groups were established with the expectation that each would meet between August and October of 2023, creating a set of actionable recommendations for consideration by the full Task Force during Meeting Four. These work groups (Programmatic Movements, Transition Logistics, and Data and Metrics) met virtually in September and Early October 2023.

MEETING FOUR: REVIEW AND REFINEMENT OF DRAFT REPORT (OCTOBER 18, 2023)

During Meeting Four, representatives from each work group presented draft recommendations to the Task Force. These recommendations, refined through group discussion and subsequently adopted by the body, are included in a subsequent section as the final recommendations of the Task Force.

MEETING FIVE: PRESENTATION OF FINAL REPORT (DECEMBER 11, 2023)

During the Task Force's fifth and final meeting, its final report was transmitted to Governor Kelly, who received a presentation outlining the group's final recommendations.

SECTION THREE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOUR RESULTS

Community Engagement Tour Overview

Executive Order 23-01, which established the Early Childhood Transition Task Force, tasked the group with holding a series of meetings across the state to generate public feedback on Kansas' current early childhood system and the state's role in it. The Executive Order specifically stated that the Task Force was tasked with "Conducting a series of stakeholder engagement opportunities to elicit feedback on the current early childhood governance structure and better understand the needs of parents, families,

providers, and businesses." The Order further directed the Task Force to conduct "a review that synthesizes feedback received from families, providers, community leaders, and the business sector" that should include "recommendations on how the state delivery system and governance model can be improved to respond to family and community need" and "how the state can better engage with parents, families, and communities on a regular basis to ensure family-voice is centered in the work of state agencies."

To achieve the charge of Executive Order 23-01, the Task Force planned a series of nine different community listening sessions across the state. These sessions were geographically dispersed in all regions of the state, including the northwest, southwest, north central, south central, northeast, and southeast regions of the state. These meetings were held during the day, over the course of the last week of June 2023. The Task Force was graciously hosted in each region by community partners engaged in early childhood system. The Task Force also held a virtual listening session during the evening to accommodate Kansans who could not attend an in-person meeting during normal business hours.

Each community listening session, opened with a presentation on the operation of the Task Force and a primer on the conversations occurring across the country on early childhood governance. This introductory period of the meeting included a brief overview of the listening session's structure and what participants could expect from the meeting. Participants were then instructed that the majority of the meeting would be spent in small group discussions on a series of three guiding questions described below. Participants spent generally 30 minutes in small group discussions before the groups were brought back together for a large group "share out." In each small group, notes were taken to document the conversation. In some cases, Task Force members and staff participated in these conversations as notetakers. In meetings with higher numbers of participants, groups elected a note taker. These small group notes were collected and processed by staff.

During the large group discussion, common threads from the small groups were identified and participants had the opportunity to share their perspectives to all those in attendance. Staff notetakers also took notes for each large group discussion to fully account for all conversations at each meeting. Finally, participants were provided with the opportunity to provide additional feedback to the Task Force through email and in writing. Each participant was given a blank notecard to provide written feedback and a "Hope Meter Card" to rank their feelings toward the state's early childhood system. These cards were collected and processed by staff.

For the virtual engagement session, virtual participants received an identical presentation to open the meeting. The entirety of the meeting was spent in a group discussion. Staff notetakers again recorded the feedback generated from the discussion. Virtual attendees were prompted at the end of the meeting to fill out an online form that served as a proxy for the "Hope Meter Cards" and asked the identical questions of those who attended in person. Individuals who could not participate in the virtual session were also allowed to fill out the online form to submit their own feedback.

In collaboration, the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research (KU-CPPR) and the Hunt Institute processed the data and notes generated during these meetings. The information collected through these meetings will be used for the Task Force's work and to update of the *All In for Kansas Kids* Needs Assessment, which is funded through the Preschool Development Birth through Five Planning Grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families.

Community Engagement Tour Results

To better understand the current situation of early childhood efforts in the State of Kansas, the Early Childhood Transition Task Force conducted a statewide tour in nine locations throughout the final week of June: Chanute, Wichita, Garden City, Hays, Salina, Manhattan, Topeka, Overland Park, and Kansas City. On August 2, the Task Force also hosted a virtual opportunity to elicit additional feedback from

individuals who could not participate in an in-person meeting. The goal of this tour was to incorporate the voices of community members and their experience with the state's early childhood system and to inform the Task Force recommendations and future policymaking.

It should be noted again that discrepancies exist in determining the exact number of Kansans who attended these listening sessions and what communities they represented. Task Force staff relied on the self-reporting of attendance and personal information like name, city/county, email address, and profession/role. In some cases, attendees did not sign in during the event or did not submit their personal information. The opt-in form of self-reporting created discrepancies between sign-in attendance and headcount attendance which was taken at each meeting. Information shared in this report is based upon voluntary responses collected. In all cases, personally identifiable data and information were not used in this document and will not be made public. The comments individuals provided during discussions were not attributed to their speaker.

Number of Participants by Location

Location	Number of Participants
Chanute	36
Wichita	68
Garden City	34
Hays	36
Salina	50
Manhattan	61
Topeka	52
Overland Park	65
Kansas City	52
Virtual (including feedback form)	30
	Total: 484

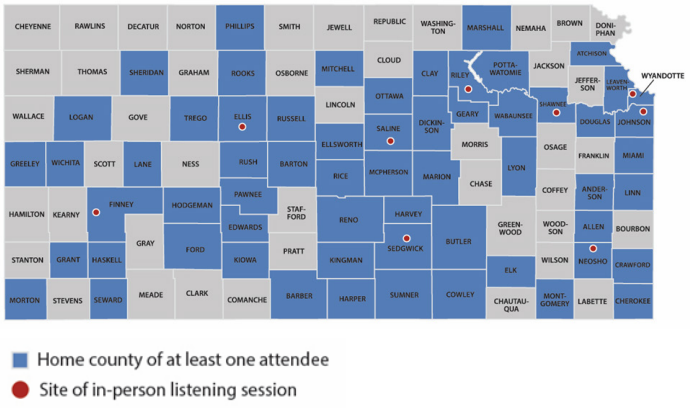
Note. *The number of each location is based on the sign-in sheets collected. Some participants may not have left their information behind. The total number may not reflect all who participated. Headcount attendance totaled 530.*

Overall, a well-informed audience attended each listening session. Although most of them felt hopeful about the future of our Early Childhood Care and Education system, responses during the sessions and additional comments on the note cards report that the current system and structures are inadequate to meet the needs of Kansas children and families. Attendees were generous with suggestions on what is working and what needs to happen.

Attendance Geographic Distribution

As previously mentioned, these listening sessions were well attended and provided an opportunity for around 500 Kansans to provide their feedback and experience navigating the state's early childhood system. These meetings were held in all geographic meeting types of the state—meaning representation existed from frontier, rural, densely settled rural, semi-urban, and urban communities. The geographic diversity of these meetings was on display, as different communities experienced different types of challenges. In all, there were a series of overarching challenges faced by individuals in every geographic region and type. Overall, 60 different counties were represented at one of the listening sessions. When broken down to their specific communities, attendees hailed from nearly 80 different cities or towns in Kansas. This data was collected through self-reporting resulting in a more conservative counting of participants' cities and counties.

Home Counties of Attendees Map



List of city/town of residence of meeting attendees:

- Abilene
- Andover
- Arkansas City
- Atchison
- Baldwin City
- Basehor
- Beloit
- Belvue
- Bennington
- Benton
- Chanute
- Clay Center
- Coffeyville
- Derby
- Dighton
- Dodge City
- El Dorado
- Elkhart
- Ellinwood
- Ellsworth
- Emporia
- Frontenac
- Garden City
- Garnett
- Girard
- Goddard
- Great Bend
- Gypsum
- Hays
- Holcomb
- Howard
- Hoxie
- Humboldt
- Hutchinson
- Iola
- Jetmore
- Junction City
- Kansas City
- Lacrosse
- Lawrence
- Leavenworth
- Leawood
- Lenexa
- Leoti
- Liberal
- Lindsborg
- Lowe
- Manhattan
- Marion
- Marysville
- McFarland
- McPherson
- Merriam
- Moran
- Mulvane
- Newton
- Oakley
- Olathe
- Overland Park
- Phillipsburg
- Pittsburg
- Plainville
- Prairie Village
- Randolph
- Rosehill
- Salina
- Satanta
- Shawnee
- Sublette
- Topeka
- Tribune
- Ulysses
- WaKeeney
- Wamego
- Weir
- Wellington
- Whitewater
- Wichita

Listening Session Results

The participants' responses were prompted by questions in three different categories: Needs and Barriers, Bright Spots, and State's Efficiency in Early Child Care and Education.

- **Question 1**: What challenges, gaps, or barriers have you and your community faced while navigating the early childhood system? What are the greatest needs you and your community are facing?
- **Question 2**: What services and programs are currently working on the local level and serve as bright spots for progress in supporting young children and families? What innovation is occurring in your community that could become models for practice in other regions and statewide?
- **Question 3**: How would you evaluate the state's efficiency in providing support to you and your community in the early childhood sector? How has the State of Kansas—and the programs it operates—contributed to your successes and challenges?
  - For example, how has the state's operation of child care licensing, home visiting, child care subsidy, or other programs impacted your experience navigating the system?

Analysts divided the key themes extracted from responses collected in each location by areas to "Improve" and "Celebrate". Themes were consistent across the state with consensus around challenges such as inefficiencies, low wages, and workforce recruitment.

TO IMPROVE

- Licensing. The current process is slow, cumbersome, and hindered by the Fire Marshal's outdated security code and response rate. New providers often do not know where they are in the process and what they need to do to get approved. In rural areas, in-home providers feel less inclined to go through the application process due to the time and effort it requires.
- Lack of Workforce. Some care facilities that shut down during the Covid-19 pandemic never reopened. Low wages make recruitment and staff retention difficult. Many providers think that there are too few child care training programs available in their areas. The antiquated public perception of early child care professions due to some government officials' indifferent attitude toward the field further lowers potential providers' interest in joining. Many child care providers feel they do not garner the same respect as educators. The inadequate workforce is in a perpetual deficit cycle where one person calling in sick causes a domino effect that sometimes results in having to shut down a classroom.
- Affordability — Child care comes with a high cost of both receiving and providing care. To many respondents, the cost of care still feels high even with the state's subsidy. Some described the situation as a donut hole for middle-income families in that they made too much to receive child care subsidies, yet the portion of their pay devoted to child care is burdensome. Meanwhile, the providers describe child care as a low margin business, where it is difficult to keep their lights on and doors open.
- Accessibility. Many families reported that they do not have reliable transportation to seek out care due to the lack of a vehicle or the long travel distance and time. Geographic boundaries are not always aligned which makes smooth transitions between services difficult (transportation between school system and child care). Similar feedback was received from early childhood professionals. The long travel time reduces the home visitors' capacity to work with more families. There are also language

challenges and immigration issues that prevent families from getting services they need.

- System Navigation. Participants from all nine locations made the point that it is difficult to navigate the various programs and find relevant information. Families reported that different programs do not communicate with one another to offer a cohesive system. State employees often do not have the correct information to guide them through the complicated system.
- Inefficiencies. There was recognition that there has been increased collaboration over the past couple of years between agencies, however the system is stressed, and staff are doing the best they can. Turnover at the state level has resulted in loss of historical knowledge and smooth communication between state agencies. Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) licensing specialists (surveyors) were recognized as being available and helpful, however the dual requirements and processes for licensing and subsidy required by the KDHE and Kansas Department of Children and Families (DCF) make it difficult for new providers to navigate. There is a tension between state policies and local needs: Local communities must piece together fragmented funding to create a cohesive system. Grant applications and reporting requirements are burdensome.
- Programmatic Funding. Restricted funding makes it difficult for communities to provide the services families need. Special education is not fully funded. There is a growing need for mental health services, which are largely unmet and underfunded.
- Social Stigma and/or Assistance Fatigue. Some families chose not to seek help because of perceived social stigma around receiving government subsidies and fear of professionals coming into their home (and removing their children). Others mentioned the difficulty of accessing services. Providers reported sometimes not being given reasons for subsidy denial. This negative public perception is a hurdle to state efforts to build a cohesive Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) system.

TO CELEBRATE

- Local School Districts. Many communities noted extensive collaboration between local school districts and community-based agencies that they hadn't experienced in the past. Additionally, many schools opened space to provide child care.
- Business Support and Public-Private Partnerships. Local businesses collaborate with Chambers of Commerce and provide financial for private investments in the early child care ecosystem. Many noted the joint partnerships of local governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private-sector investors that rallied to generate local solutions to the lack of adequate child care in their community. The Child Care Accelerator Grants were recognized as a rare opportunity for facility construction and expansion of service capacity.
- Nonprofit Organizations. Entities such as Child Care Aware of Kansas, United Way and the Dane G. Hansen Foundation have been a positive force in providing guidance on navigation and resources.
- Unconventional Spaces. Local community centers and churches open spaces and provide community support in early child care.
- Collaboration of State Agencies. Attendees noted the increased communication and collaboration of state agencies. Most found this encouraging and wanted to see more of it.
- Professional Passion and Pride. Early Childhood Care and Education professionals believe in the work they are doing and want to be able to afford to continue working in this profession.

Community Engagement Hope Meter Cards

Throughout the series of community listening sessions, participants filled out "Hope Meter Cards" to collect their background information and feelings towards the early childhood system. The table below shows the role of the 416 listening session participants who filled out Hope Meter cards. Over 40% of the attendees were service providers. About a fifth were community members and parents. The remainder were policy makers, state leadership in Early Childhood, or identified with other roles.

Distribution of Roles of Attendees

Role	N	%
Community Member	88	21.1%
Other	19	4.6%
Parent	94	22.5%
Policy Maker	16	3.8%
Service Provider	183	43.9%
State leadership in EC	17	4.1%

Note. *For the purposes of this data analysis, the primary role identification of participants was used.*

The Hope Meter Card asked participants two questions:

a. Their experience with state programs
b. How hopeful they are that Kansas is going in the right direction in early childhood

The table below shows that the average hope score was high, with an average of 7.42, meaning the state is going in the right direction. This high score conveys trust and confidence from those in attendance. Over 75% of attendees indicated a Hope Meter score of 7 or above with almost 14% expressing high hope and confidence in state leadership.

Overall descriptive statistics of Hope Card scores

Rating	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Hope Rating (1-10, with 1 less hopeful and 10 more hopeful)	416	0	10	7.42	1.94

Frequency of Hope Card scores

HOPE RATING (1-10, WITH 1 LESS HOPEFUL AND 10 MORE HOPEFUL)	N	%
0	1	0.2
1	7	1.7
2	5	1.2
3	7	1.7
4	10	2.4
5	24	5.8
6	48	11.5
7	84	20.1
8	115	27.6
9	58	13.9
10	57	13.7
System Missing	1	0.2

We further analyzed the scores to find any significant difference in Hope Card scores between groups. As shown below, there were no significant differences in Hope scores between groups, with averages ranging from 7 – 8 in all groups, including parents and community members.

On average, experience with state programs was rated a 7/10, with no statistically significant differences between groups. In other words, attendees were very familiar with the ECCE system. We also analyzed if participants' experience with state programs has any relation to their hopefulness and found that there is a strong statistically significant correlation ($r = .443$; $p < .001$) between experience with state programs and Hope scores (see Table 10). The more familiar the participant was with state programs was, the higher their Hope score was.

Recommendations

- Support public-private partnerships to increase the availability and accessibility of child care providers and establish child care as essential community infrastructure.
- Establish an agency under which select programs would be housed, making it easier for families and providers to navigate services.
- Streamline the licensing process to address barriers and design an efficient process for providers.
- Provide technical assistance and education on business ownership, funding streams, grant writing, and capacity building to address difficulties providers face with accessing funding streams such as operational grants.

Descriptive statistics of Hope Card scores by attendee role (Hope rating (1 less hopeful to 10 more hopeful)

ROLE (CHOOSE ONE OR MORE)	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Community Member	7.33	88	2.027
Other	6.83	18	2.256
Parent	7.37	94	1.912
Policy Maker	8.13	16	1.586
Service provider	7.41	183	1.933
State leadership in EC	8.18	17	1.425
Total	7.42	416	1.938

Note. *hopeful to 10 more hopeful) * Role (choose one or more)*

SECTION FOUR: FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION TASK FORCE

Kansas supports an important array of services for young children and their families – including subsidized child care, home visiting, pre-k education, and more. The full inventory of those services is included in subsequent sections, with descriptions of how they are structured. This detailed accounting is essential to understand the complexity of the current early childhood policy landscape.

Importantly, when families with young children think about the services they need, they do not think about funding streams and their different requirements – they think about finding a place where their child is adored, stimulated, and happy. Raising a child is an enormous amount of work for any family, and it can be hard for any parent to find the support services they need; this is likely to be particularly true for families with limited financial resources. In a parent's ideal world, it will be easy to find all of the necessary services and determine eligibility for those services. But in the current world of Kansas state government, fragmentation makes it harder for those families to achieve their goals.

Some providers attempt to buffer parents by leveraging multiple funding streams to support the services they offer. This may make it easier for families to get what they need, but it can put substantial strain on those providers. Each state funding stream generally comes with its own quality and financial oversight requirements – and those requirements have not been thoughtfully harmonized – making it easy for providers to get caught up in red tape. Early childhood providers are typically independent businesses and/or non-profit organizations trying to compete in a low-margin market, and any additional burden state government puts on them makes it harder to survive. Moreover, when providers are struggling with different requirements from different funding streams, there's no single administrator in state government empowered to resolve those different requirements.

When the Task Force asked Kansans about their struggles with the early childhood system, much of what it heard back spoke to the challenges of divided authority. The problems included:

- Overlapping requirements for programs providing similar services to the same populations;
- Challenges in coordinating among service providers;
- Lack of clear lines of decision-making;
- A need for more coherent data across services;
- A lack of alignment in workforce policy;
- A lack of support for providers;
- Funding streams that are not optimized toward common goals;
- Public confusion over which agencies are responsible for which services;
- Competing oversight on providers from multiple agencies;
- A system that is hard for families to navigate; and
- Communities struggling to provide a coherent system for their families.

Other states have addressed these issues by unifying existing responsibilities in a single agency charged with minimizing the burden on families seeking to access service, supporting providers, ensuring consistent quality, expanding access, improving efficiency, and elevating accountability. Having a single agency will not automatically solve any of these problems, but will improve the state's processes for addressing all of them.

The Task Force is keenly aware of the core functions state government provides for children and families, all of which could be improved by unifying governance. In the current configuration of Kansas state government, each of these functions is performed separately by each agency (or even program). But providers and families would benefit from having a single agency responsible for each of these functions:

- Setting expectations for service quality, measuring progress toward those expectations, and providing supports for improvement;
- Managing funds to ensure that the system is producing the desired outcomes;
- Ensuring that there are enough qualified staff to fill the needed roles – which requires setting up a preparation and training pipeline, providing ongoing professional development, and supporting adequate compensation for essential roles;
- Determining eligibility for services and programs; and
- Communicating with the public in a manner that builds awareness and trust.

Early childhood policy is currently being overseen by four agencies that each hold expertise in a segment of that ecosystem. Increasingly states have recognized that for the early childhood ecosystem to thrive requires a single state agency that has expertise in the system as a whole, including the dynamic interplay among existing services. That unified agency can engage with stakeholders on an ongoing basis to understand how the entire system is performing, making policy and oversight adjustments as needed.

That singular expertise is a key part of making state government a better partner to communities, providers, and families. Those communities, providers, and families should be spending as little time as possible thinking about state government oversight – but when oversight is splintered among four agencies, they end up thinking about it all the more. Having a single oversight agency should reduce the friction among different services, make it easier for small businesses to thrive, and make it simpler for families to find the services they want.

Creating a new agency should not dramatically expand the size or role of state government; indeed, in many important ways it should get state government out of the way of its constituents. Unifying early childhood governance should allow state government to be more efficient, effective, and accountable, helping communities, providers, and families. The status quo is clearly not working, and many of the problems identified are problems that unified governance can help to address. The Task Force's recommendations are meant to be responsive to the concerns stakeholders have raised and move Kansas into a new phase of improved service.

Based on the lessons learned from states that have already experienced a consolidation, the Task Force organized the recommendations in three areas. The first area, transition logistics, recognizes the need for a feasible, sequenced, and well-thought-out transition plan. The second area, programmatic movements, is grounded in the landscape analysis and provides a unifying framework to address funding and service delivery fragmentation. The third area, metrics and data recommendations, identifies system-level indicators targeted for improvement in the unification process.

1. TRANSITION LOGISTICS

1.1 Kansas should streamline its early childhood governance structure by unifying early childhood care and education services into a single state entity—reforming our coordinated system into a consolidation or creation model.

1.1.1 Governor Kelly should consider both unifying services into an existing agency or creating a new agency/entity. Both options should be considered, as realignment is needed, regardless of the form it takes.

1.1.2 The unified entity should be located within the Executive Branch, be led by a highly-qualified, permanent administrator, and operate under the jurisdiction of the Governor. The unified entity should appear on the state's organizational chart and serve as its own fiscal agent.

1.1.3 The administrator of the unified entity should report to the Governor and serve at their pleasure. The administrator shall either be considered a permanent member of the Governor's Cabinet or be elevated to serve in the Cabinet at the Governor's discretion.

1.1.4 Governor Kelly and the Executive Branch should work together with the Kansas Legislature to determine what method and mechanism of unification is preferable and will ensure successful implementation of the Task Force's recommendations.

1.2 The realignment of state programs should be administered on the following timeline:

- **Enactment period/legal authorization and potential FY24 budget amendment: January-May 2024**
- **Initial transition preparation: June-August 2024**
- **Transition period—Implementation Team created: September 1, 2024**
- **New entity/Department established: July 1, 2025**
- **Baseline Data identified and documented: January 1, 2026**
- **Realignment Completed: By July 1, 2026**

1.2.1 During the enactment period, Governor Kelly should work with the Kansas Legislature to determine the best method for unification and enact the preferred form.

1.2.2 Between the enactment and FY25 fiscal year, initial transition operations should commence. See Recommendation 2.4 for details on this period.

1.2.3 Throughout FY25, transition planning should be led by a Transition Director and Interagency Advisory Team as outlined in Recommendation 2.5.

1.2.4 On July 1, 2025, entity leadership should be identified, appointed, and installed to oversee the operations of the unified entity and continue the work for transitioning programs and services. By July 1, 2025, a transition timeline for all programs should be established to identify those programs to be transferred effective July 1, 2025, and those to be transferred during the course of SFY 2026, no later than June 30, 2026.

1.2.1.5 By July 1, 2026, all programs identified for colocation in this report should be transferred to the unified entity and be administered by that entity.

1.3 Governor Kelly and the legislature should utilize either an amendment to the FY24 budget or the FY25 budget to provide seed funding that invests in the proper transition of services, rather than formally reallocating funding streams attached to specific programs to the unified entity. Funding for programs and the entity, inclusive of additional labor costs (i.e. temporary staff, overtime costs, and outside contracted services), should be included in the FY26 budget to allow for additional time to unravel funding streams and ensure adequate programmatic transfers—allowing the unified entity to be operational at the beginning of FY26 on July 1, 2025.

1.4 Following the enactment of the unified entity, the Governor's Office should initiate transition activities by searching for a Transition Director, as outlined in Recommendation 2.5 below, identifying agency unification leads, and initiating transition procedures prior to July 1, 2024.

1.5 The Governor's Office should appoint/hire a temporary Transition Director on or before July 1, 2024, to provide strategic policy oversight, serve as an interagency convener, and manage the day-to-day logistics of agency unification. The Transition Director should be experienced in operational mergers and have an understanding of state government systems; direct state government operational merger/reorganization experience strongly preferred. The Transition Director should report to the Governor.

1.5.1 To assist the Transition Director, an interagency project team comprised of current staff from KDHE, DCF, KCCTF, and KSDE should be empaneled to support the technical and operational elements of program unification. This group should be tasked with assisting the Transition Director, oversee the integration of IT, data, payroll, financial, and any other operational systems needed for the unified entity to be prepared to administer the slate of programs and services.

1.5.2 Each current state agency should also identify relevant program leadership to collaborate with the Transition Director on the programmatic movements into the unified entity. These state agencies will share collective responsibility for a successful transition.

1.5.3 Together, the interagency transition team, comprised of both program and operational staff, shall serve to support the Transition Director and implement the transition prior to the entity opening on July 1, 2025.

1.5.4 Adequate funding should be secured to hire the Transition Director and effectively support the activities outlined in these recommendations.

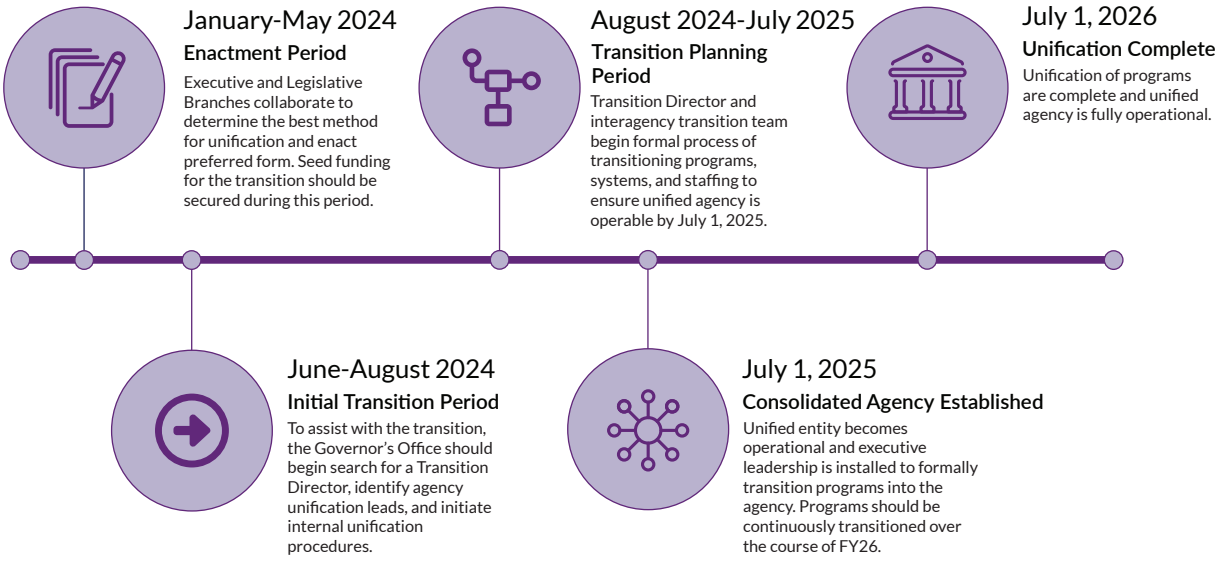
1.5.5 The Transition Director and the interagency transition team should hold a series of town hall meetings with program staff who are affected by the unification of services to ensure they have an opportunity to provide feedback on the transition, build the culture of the unified entity, and support the development of collaborative administration of early childhood programs.

1.5.6 The Transition Director should not be tapped to become the permanent administrator of the new entity once it becomes operational on July 1, 2025. The Transition Director should be held accountable for identifying and overseeing operational changes necessary during transition to meet the goals of more effective delivery of services. Successful planning under the leadership of the Transition Director should lead to smooth transition to the leadership of the permanent administrator. By separating the two roles, the new leadership will have wide latitude to establish the culture and norms for the new entity.

1.5.7 If additional services are required to assist with the transition, the Governor's Office should consider supplementing the Transition Director with outside consulting services to create collaborative support for this process.

1.6 The Governor's Office should initiate a search process for the unified entity's executive leadership throughout 2024, ensuring that an administrator is identified and hired as early into the transition process as possible.

1.7 Once the entity becomes operational and leadership is installed on July 1, 2025, programs should begin moving into the unified entity over the course of FY26 (July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026). The transition should be complete, and the unified entity should be fully operational by July 1, 2026.



1.7.1 No interruptions in service should occur during the transition planning or transfer of programs into the unified entity.

1.8 Any necessary memorandum of understanding should be adopted during the transition process to ensure seamless delivery of services to children, families, and providers.

2. PROGRAMMATIC MOVEMENTS

2.1 A unified early childhood entity should co-locate a variety of programs encompassing child care, early childhood grants and services, and home visiting.

2.2 Currently, state programs impacting the delivery of child care services are spread across the Kansas Department for Children and Families, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund. All identified programs relating to child care (serving children of all ages) should be realigned under one entity to ensure adequate collaboration and drive statewide strategies on child care. This new entity should serve as the central point for improving the child care system across the state.

2.2.1 Child Care Assistance and Child Care Quality Improvement (currently located at DCF) and Child Care Licensing (currently at KDHE) should be transferred to the unified entity to ensure adequate alignment across the child care sector through the combination of child care quality programs, funding streams, and licensure.

2.2.2 Transition planning should ensure that families have easy access to enrollment in economic support programs, including the child care subsidy program, both during transition and for the long-term. Strategies to ensure ease of access to these programs should include a review of the intake process for each program, including any updates to IT systems needed to simplify the eligibility review and enrollment process. Consideration should include the possibility that an MOU may be necessary between the new entity and DCF to ensure collaboration and continuity of operations.

2.3 The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, their programming, and operations should be embedded in the unified entity.

2.3.1 The Kansas Children's Cabinet Board should retain its statutory authority (K.S.A. 38-1901) charging it – among other tasks – with assisting the Governor in developing a coordinated, comprehensive service delivery system to serve the children and families of Kansas, the identification of service gaps and the facilitation of interagency and interdepartmental cooperation toward the common goal of serving children and families. The Kansas Children's Cabinet Board should also retain its designation as the state's Early Childhood Advisory Council in accordance with the federal Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 (Kansas Executive Order 20-02).

2.3.2 Within the unified entity, the Kansas Children's Cabinet Board should retain statutory (K.S.A. 38-2103) responsibility for reviewing, assessing, and evaluating all uses of the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF), funded through the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY Fund), and the programs funded using those dollars. The Kansas Children's Cabinet Board should act as the main grant maker for the new entity and approve of the awarding of current or new grant programs that may be developed and administered by the new entity.

2.3.3 The Kansas Children's Cabinet Board should not have direct oversight of other programming administered by the unified entity, specifically, but not limited to, the management of child care subsidy, child care quality, child care licensing, and home visiting programs. These specific programs, and others, should be administered by staff located in the new entity and report to the entity's administrative leadership, not the Children's Cabinet Board. The unified entity's administrative leadership should work to develop methods of collaboration with the Children's Cabinet Board to ensure alignment between the entity's activities and the Cabinet Board's oversight authority over specific early childhood funding steams.

2.4 Currently, home visiting programs are administered and/or funded by the Kansas Department for Children and Families, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, and the Kansas State Department of Education. The unified entity should include the colocation of home visiting programs currently administered by these four agencies to create a continuum of care, rather than the current fragmented approach that currently exists within the state.

2.4.1 One entity providing oversight and vision for home visiting should lead to enhanced collaboration among the multiple providers of the various models of home visiting offered in the state.

2.4.2 The programs that should be unified under one entity include:

- Healthy Families America
- Parents as Teachers
- Maternal and Child Health Home Visiting (MCH)
- Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)

2.5 Head Start programming and operational supports currently housed within the Kansas Department of Children and Families, should be transitioned to the unified entity.

2.5.1 The programs that should be unified under one entity include:

- Head Start Collaboration Office
- Kansas Early Head Start Child Care Partnership and Kansas Early Head Start Home Visitation

2.6 Programs focused primarily on health outcomes should remain at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, but structures should be put in place to ensure adequate collaboration exists between these health-focused programs and early childhood services administered by the unified entity.

2.6.1 The unified entity should consider appointing a dedicated administrator to work across program type and state agencies to ensure alignment between home visiting and these types of health-oriented programs.

2.6.2 The Department of Health and Environment should establish a senior leadership position for an early childhood specialist(s) within the Medicaid program, with a strong focus on supporting optimal health and development (including social and emotional development) in the early life stages of infants and young children (birth to kindergarten entry), and their caregivers. Early childhood specialists would be responsible for promoting investments centered on prevention and early-intervention activities, supporting dyadic care (for young children and their caregivers, together), and achieving parity in addressing and supporting both physical and behavioral health. Such specialists are equipped to leverage their practical understanding of the connection between early health and early learning and how to build and improve care delivery systems that are person-centered, provider team-based, and respectful and supportive of caregivers and community.

2.7 Preschool programs housed in the Kansas State Department of Education should remain in their current locations given the prevalence of these programs being administered by local unified school districts and some elements of their funding are provided through the school finance formula, both of which are under the purview of the Department.

2.8 Programs focused primarily on child welfare (child protective services, foster care, adoption) should remain at the Kansas Department for Children and Families, including prevention programs funded through the federal Families First Program. However, structures should be put in place to ensure adequate collaboration exists between these child welfare focused programs and early childhood services administered by the unified entity.

2.8.1 The unified entity should consider appointing a centralized administrator to work across program types and state agencies to ensure alignment between home visiting and these types of child welfare and child welfare prevention programs.

Programs Identified for Unification

Kansas Department for Children and Families

- Child Care Assistance (CCDF Subsidy)
- Child Care Quality
- Healthy Families America
- Head Start Collaboration Office
- Early Head Start Child Care Partnership and Early Head Start Home Visitation
- Parent Skill-Building—Family First Preservation Services Act (Parents and Teachers, Healthy Families America, Healthy Families America-2)

Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund

- CIF Grants (Early Childhood Block Grants)
- Imagination Library of Kansas
- Early Childhood Infrastructure
- Children's Cabinet Accountability Fund
- Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention
- Preschool Development Implementation and Planning Grants Birth-5
- Cabinet Administration
- Workforce Registry
- Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS)
- Distinct Count of Children Served in Early Childhood Programs

Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund

- Child Care Licensing and Early Youth Care Programs
- Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Home Visiting/Universal Home Visiting
- Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)

Kansas State Department of Education

- Parents as Teachers

3. METRICS AND DATA RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 While it may be challenging to judge success and efficiency, the following baseline metrics are recommended as benchmarks (as feasible) both to determine whether the state of Kansas is making progress and whether the unified entity is having positive impacts for children, families, providers, and communities. The Task Force recognizes that certain metrics below as likely to fall outside of the unified entity's direct control and that agencies may not currently be collecting many of the specific metrics identified. Where relevant, metrics should capture demographic information to allow for the tracking of equitable access (geography, race, gender, etc.) across the early childhood system. The new entity should work in a collaborative manner with other agencies and external partners to collect data and determine benchmarks. Likewise, in instances where this data is already being collected, its sharing is encouraged immediately and independent of legislative action. Where available, the new entity should utilize data from 2025, or as recently as possible, to serve as baselines that can measure the effectiveness of the new entity's operations. This will allow tracking of metrics concurrent to the program transition into the new entity.

3.1.1 For child care subsidy, the unified entity should track:

- The number of families receiving child care assistance.
- The time it takes for a family to become enrolled in child care assistance.
- The number of providers enrolled to accept child care subsidy.
- The time it takes for a provider to become approved to accept child care subsidy.
- The time families or providers must wait to speak to a representative to receive enrollment or other technical assistance.
- The number of times families or providers must contact the unified entity to attempt to enroll in child care assistance.

3.1.2 For child care licensing and availability, the unified entity should track:

- The number of licensed child care slots in the state (capacity).

- The number of licensed child care facilities in the state.
- The supply and demand of child care slots in the state.
- The number of child care facilities opened and closed.
- The time it takes for a provider or facility to become licensed and fully operational.
- The number of child care license applications received.
- The number of digital fingerprinting locations across the state.
- The time between receiving fingerprints and results of a background check.

3.1.3 For early childhood workforce, the unified entity should track:

- The median wage of child care workers (by provider type, as feasible)
- The number of individuals working in the early childhood field, and specifically in licensed child care facilities.
- The retention rate of child care workers and licensed facilities.
- The educational attainment of licensed child care providers.
- The number of child care providers who attain a higher level of career progression in the field following their initial employment status and type of progression.
- The number of postsecondary students enrolled in an early childhood education program in Kansas.
- The number of postsecondary students engaged in early childhood-related practicums or on-the-job training opportunities.

3.1.4 For home visiting programs, the unified entity should track:

- The number of children and families participating in a home visiting program.
- The number of home visits in which a child/family participates.
- The number of different funding streams utilized for home visiting programs.
- Obstacles to successful home visit delivery.
- Number of home visitors in the workforce.
- Number of home visits reimbursed by Medicaid.
- Number of children receiving developmental screenings.
- To the extent feasible, these data points should reflect the percentage of the eligible population served, as opposed to simply the number of children/families served.

3.1.5 For business and industry, the unified entity should collaborate with the Department of Commerce to track:

- The number of businesses providing direct child care or providing financial assistance for child care to their workforce.
- The number of businesses inquiring for state support in the development of child care opportunities for their workforce.
- The number of businesses building child care into their economic development plans when entering incentive negotiations with the state.
- The amount of additional state incentives provided to businesses who include child care into the economic development plans when those incentive packages are negotiated.

3.1.6 To determine operational success and efficiency, the unified entity should:

- Ensure child care assistance payments can be made by the entity on Day One.
- Ensure payroll is operational and accurate on Day One.
- Ensure that IT systems are fully prepared and operational on Day One.
- Ensure the public has access to the entity and is aware of its existence on Day One.

3.1.7 Other general metrics that the unified entity should track include:

- The number of children enrolled in a pre-k program.
- Kindergarten readiness.
- The number of children under 5 years old who die.
- The number of children under 5 years old entering the child welfare system.
- The amount of federal funding Kansas currently pulls down for early childhood programs.

3.2 To achieve efficiency and success, the unified entity should implement a robust consumer assistance program, targeted towards families and providers, to provide technical and operational support for their progression through the licensing process and/or child care assistance programs.

3.2.1 This program should be adequately staffed to ensure personal connection and access to individuals at the entity.

3.3 Kansas should consider the creation of a single website for easier access to the continuum of early childhood services provided to children and families. This website should include an online enrollment portal that allows families to easily determine which types of state programs and assistance for which they would qualify.

3.3.1 This website should be easily navigable and accessible to all Kansans regardless of their personal background.

3.4 The Kansas Department of Commerce should collaborate with the new entity to develop intentional outreach processes that provide support to businesses in the process of providing child care services to their employees. Furthermore, the Department should work to determine how best to prioritize child care in economic development plans created by prospective businesses looking to access the state's incentive programs and asses the tools needed to support businesses' needs in this sector.

3.4.1 The State should consider mandating the inclusion of child care plans in these economic development plans if a prospective businesses attempts to access the state's incentive programs. The current structure of economic development incentives is not focused on rewarding businesses for offering support for financial resources for child care.

4. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

While outside of the Task Force's direct governance charge – *and therefore not formal recommendations* - the group uplifts the following "game changing actions" for further study and consideration by Kansas Policymakers. These issues were identified over the course of the Task Force work as possible solutions to move the early childhood system forward. In many cases, these ideas were elevated by members of the community, resource experts, and Task Force members themselves.

- Increase state funding for the child care sector.
- Utilize Economic Development Incentive Funds (EDIF) funds for businesses to include plans for child care in their economic development planning.
- Explore the creation and piloting of a child care cost-sharing program for Kansas families, similar to Michigan's Tri-Share Program or Kentucky's Employee Child Care Assistance Partnership Program.
- Create a Child Care Specialist position at the Office of State Fire Marshal to prioritize the inspection and approval of child care facilities, train surveyors on child care, and ensure systematic consistency for providers across the state.
- Review the current funding structure for the state's preschool programs and explore ways to increase collaboration with non-USD-based preschools.
- Kansas should consider transferring Infant and Toddler Services (IDEA Part C) to the Department of Education to ensure greater alignment between Part B and Part C services, streamline the transition of children through these two service systems, and create a single data system to properly track the delivery of services.

SECTION FIVE: CALL TO ACTION

In closing, the Kansas Early Childhood Task Force leaves this year of intensive study convinced that the state can and must do better. Better by its children and families. Better by its early childhood service providers. And better by Kansas taxpayers.

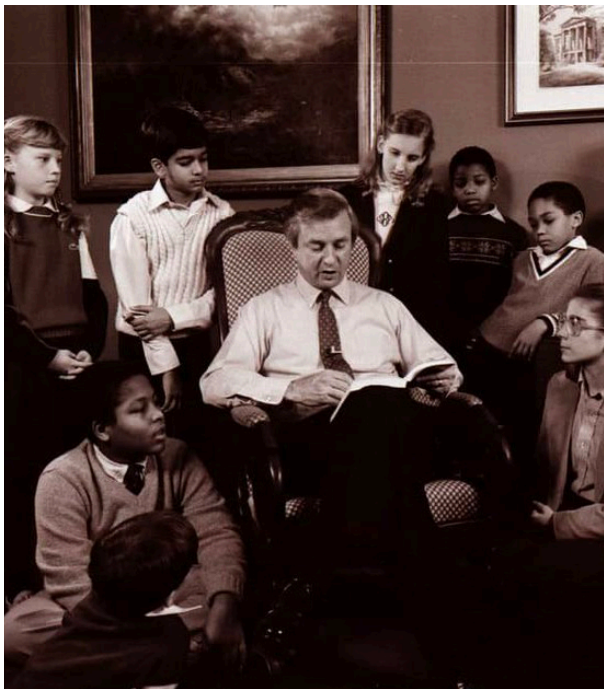
The final report outlines the importance of a robust and well-functioning early childhood care and education system for our children, families, communities, and economy. We also provide an overview of Kansas' current early childhood system and the efforts to improve that system over the last five years, and, while we admire the intentional focus to make our coordinated system nimbler, the current structure is inadequate to meet the needs of Kansans. Through our study of these issues, the Task Force has concluded that critical reform is necessary if we want to create the best early childhood system in the country and better serve Kansans from all walks of life. To achieve this goal, we propose a series of recommendations that will move our system forward and improve the experiences of families and early childhood services providers. More than anything else, we believe Kansas needs to reform our current system to unify early childhood programs and services under one agency to reduce red tape and bureaucratic burdens, improve the ability for families to navigate the system, and ensure efficient delivery of services to Kansas children. Most importantly, Kansas children will benefit from the implementation of these recommendations.

We are particularly grateful to The Hunt Institute for its support throughout this process and to the Kansas Department for Children and Families, the Kansas State Department of Education, the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment for their active and collaborative participation in this process, their longstanding commitment to the state's children, families, and early childhood service providers, and their openness to consider changes in the best interest of all Kansans.

We have the momentum and the public will to make these needed changes now. The creation of a unified early childhood entity – whether housed within an existing department or a newly created agency – is a critical step forward in making Kansas the nation's best state in the nation for children and families. While the process will be complex, the long-term payoff will be significant. We stand ready to support Governor Kelly and the legislature as they consider and operationalize the recommendations contained in this report.

APPENDICES

- Executive Order 23-01
- Landscape Analysis and Fiscal Maps
- Data and Metrics Logic Model
- Interim Report
- Meeting Agendas
  - March 31, 2023
  - May 16, 2023
  - August 17, 2023
  - October 18, 2023
- Selected Meeting Materials
  - Meeting #1
    - Kansas Early Childhood Governance Issue Brief
    - Bipartisan Policy Center Report
  - Meeting #2
    - State Governance Comparison
    - Meeting #1 Takeaways
  - Community Engagement Tour Preliminary Results
  - Meeting #3
    - Meeting Overview and Work Groups



Established in 2001, The Hunt Institute honors the legacy of James B. Hunt, Jr., the former governor of North Carolina who distinguished himself as an ardent champion of education.

The Hunt Institute brings together people and resources to inspire and inform elected officials and policymakers about key issues in education, resulting in visionary leaders who are prepared to take strategic action for greater educational outcomes and student success.

In 2016, The Hunt Institute became an independent, nonprofit entity and joined forces with Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy to pursue research, educational partnerships, and events related to improving education policy.

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THE hunt institute

FINAL REPORT OF THE KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION TASK FORCE

Appendices

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GOVERNOR LAURA KELLY

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 23-01

Establishing the Early Childhood Transition Task Force

WHEREAS, the earliest years of a child's life are most critical in preparation for lifelong academic, health, and social success because of the rapid proliferation of neural connectivity throughout those early months and years;

WHEREAS, constant exposure to safe and supportive environments strengthen the development of those neural connections—determining the child's sensory, language, and cognitive functions upon which all subsequent brain development is built;

WHEREAS, investments in early childhood care and education pay dividends for the state by lowering costs down the line and creating our greatest return on investment through improving future educational, health, and economic outcomes;

WHEREAS, Kansas is committed to ensuring that all children have access to the critical services and programs needed for healthy development and that all families in need of services are supported;

WHEREAS, to improve access and increase the quantity of high-quality early childhood services, Kansas must center the needs of children and families while moving at the speed of business through its efforts to deliver these services;

WHEREAS, Kansas currently utilizes an inadequately-coordinated system of governance to deliver early childhood services—resulting in inefficiencies, redundancies, and structural barriers for families, communities, and businesses that obstruct access to state-level support;

WHEREAS, to improve access to high-quality services and streamline regulatory, procedural, and fiscal management of programs, the Kelly Administration is committed to ensuring all Kansas children—especially those between zero and five years of age—have healthy childhoods that are

supported by a robust early childhood system which improves outcomes and effectively provides high-quality early care and education, adapts to the needs of families and communities, and is equitably accessible to all communities across the state.

NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority vested in me as Governor of the State of Kansas, I hereby establish the Early Childhood Transition Task Force ("Task Force") and order the following:

1. The Governor shall appoint the following to serve as members of the Task Force:
    a. The Secretary for Children and Families, or a designee
    b. The Secretary of Health and Environment, or a designee
    c. The Executive Director of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, or a designee
    d. The Secretary of Commerce, or a designee
    e. The Commissioner of Education, or a designee
    f. Two representatives of business or state or local chambers of commerce
    g. Two representatives of partner or philanthropic organizations
    h. Two representatives of early childhood service providers or industry organizations
    i. Two representatives of advocacy organizations
2. The Governor may invite two members of the Kansas State Senate and two members of the Kansas House of Representatives to participate as full voting members of the Task Force.
3. The Governor shall select a chair and vice-chair, or co-chairs, from the Task Force's membership, and the chair or co-chairs may establish rules for the Task Force's meetings and conduct of business.
    a. Upon the absence or vacancy of the chair, the vice-chair shall serve as chair in an acting capacity.
4. The Governor may appoint an honorary chair to serve in a ceremonial capacity.
    a. The honorary chair shall not serve as a voting member of the Task Force but may engage with the work of the Task Force in an advisory role or in a manner deemed appropriate by the chair or co-chairs.
5. All members shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

6. Members shall receive no compensation or reimbursement for expenses and shall serve voluntarily. Officers or employees of state agencies who are appointed to the Task Force as part of their duties shall be authorized to participate on the Task Force and may claim subsistence, allowance, milage, or associated expenses from their respective agency budgets as permitted by law.
7. The Task Force shall be subject to the Kansas Open Records Act and the Kansas Open Meetings Act.
8. Plans, reports, or recommendations of any nature adopted by the Task Force shall be considered advice to the Governor, and shall not be construed as official policies, positions, or interpretations of laws, rules, or regulations by any department or agency of state government, nor shall any such department or agency be bound in any manner to consider such advice when conducting their advisory and regulatory affairs.
9. The Task Force shall be guided by the following vision statement:
    a. All Kansas children—especially those between zero and five years of age—deserve healthy childhoods that are supported by a robust early childhood system which improves outcomes and effectively provides high-quality early care and education, adapts to the needs of families and communities, and is equitably accessible to all communities across the state.
10. The Task Force shall work towards the mission of creating a framework for a model single-agency governance structure for early childhood programming that consolidates initiatives and funding under the leadership of a new-cabinet level position.
11. The Task Force's work shall be guided by a commitment to the following principles:
    a. Children, family, and community well-being shall be centered throughout the Task Force's work;
    b. Efforts shall be focused on maximizing efficiencies to reduce administrative burdens on families and improve access to early childhood services through the creation of a new executive agency;
    c. The consolidation of early childhood services shall be informed by what families and communities say they want and need;
    d. Access to programs and services shall be equitable and available to all children and families—regardless of socio-economic status or geographic location;

e. Intentional focus shall be placed on developing strategies to reach families and young children in care deserts or furthest from opportunity and existing resources;
f. Access to health, nutrition, mental health, home visiting, early intervention, supports for families, early learning, and other services in the critical prenatal to five age period will critically impact academic success, economic opportunities, and the prosperity of Kansas;
g. Efforts shall be made using data-informed approaches and explore better ways to develop shared data systems;
h. Work shall focus on strengthening and expanding the mixed childcare delivery system already in use in Kansas;
i. Alignment across sectors and state agencies will increase capacity, maximize funding, and create a more streamlined delivery of services;
j. The importance of growing a diverse and well-supported early childhood workforce shall remain at the forefront and be informed by the Task Force's work;
k. While focusing on advancing our delivery system, work shall highlight the importance of defining quality care and expanding capacity and access to create a greater quantity of quality services;
l. To incentivize innovation and respond to family need, communities must be empowered to develop local, community-based solutions that take a whole-child and whole-family approach in responding to need;
m. To ensure holistic childhood well-being and improve health outcomes, there must be alignment between state efforts to improve early learning and care and existing prenatal and maternal health initiatives; and
n. Strengthening early childhood developmental health is vital to ensuring that children are prepared to achieve academic success and are setup for lifelong learning.

12. The Task Force shall be tasked with:
    a. Conducting an analysis of the current early childhood delivery system in Kansas and how it is financed—with specific focus on gaps, inefficiencies, and redundancies. This work should focus on how creating a single-agency governance structure for early childhood services could overcome these challenges and improve

how care is delivered, accessed, and funded. This analysis must specifically include:

i. A review of current early childhood programs and policies dispersed between the Kansas Department for Children and Families, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, and the Kansas Department of Education. The review should pay special attention to where current statutory authority over certain operations exists and where possible areas of redundancy occur;

ii. A review of how current funding systems blend and braid various funding opportunities, with special attention to how funding streams are currently utilized for early childhood programs that are housed across departments. This fiscal review should map the routes all private, public, federal, and state funding streams take from funding authority to program application;

iii. A review of how Kansas might integrate existing programming into a consolidated delivery system and what need might exist for new programming that the state currently lacks;

iv. Recommendations on how cross-agency collaboration and partnerships can be fostered to develop a whole-of-government approach to strengthening the delivery of early childhood services—in a single-agency model;

    1. Specifically, ensuring that data infrastructure is integrated across agencies, account for both qualitative and quantitative methods, and can be widely utilized by multiple state agencies.

v. Recommendations on how an executive agency might maximize efficiencies for early childhood providers and their workforce. This work should determine how licensing, workforce development and support, and facility review can be improved to eliminate barriers to entry for providers and professionals. This should also include a review of current regulatory structures that complicate the process of entering the early childhood sector; and

vi. Recommendations on how executive agencies can strengthen the existing healthcare workforce to better support the development of young children

and wellbeing of mothers through improved access to comprehensive care. This should also include a review of how to secure improved health outcomes for children, financial sustainability of delivery models, and cultivating workforce pipelines.

vii. An analysis of key lessons learned from states already advancing consolidated systems of early childhood governance to inform Kansas's own process.

b. Conducting a series of stakeholder engagement opportunities to elicit feedback on the current early childhood governance structure and better understand the needs of parents, families, providers, and businesses.

   i. Following the engagement of stakeholders, the Task Force should conduct a review that synthesizes feedback received from families, providers, community leaders, and the business sector. This review should include recommendations on how the state delivery system and governance model can be improved to respond to family and community need. It should also include recommendations for how the state can better engage with parents, families, and communities on a regular basis to ensure family-voice is centered in the work of state agencies.

c. Drafting a transition plan to ensure the continuous operation of state services upon the creation of a new state agency for early childhood.

   i. This plan should include detailed recommendations for what programs and services should remain in their current place or transition into a new agency. Each recommendation should consider the challenges and benefits of moving programs from one agency to another.

   ii. This plan should focus on movement between agencies and how collaboration can be strengthened with non-executive agencies. It should also include recommendations for any necessary interagency agreements.

   iii. This plan should include a review of what additional funding and resources might be needed to transition to a single-agency governance model effectively and efficiently.

iv. This plan should also provide recommended goals and metrics for the agency to strive towards once operational.

d. Drafting proposed legislation that creates a new cabinet-level, single state agency that oversees Kansas's early childhood education and care programs.

13. The Task Force shall develop and submit an interim report to the Governor by July 1, 2023, and a final report to the Governor by January 1, 2024.

This document shall be filed with the Secretary of State as Executive Order No. 23-01. It shall become effective immediately and remain in force until rescinded.

THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE BY THE GOVERNOR Laura Kelly

DATED January 10, 2023

FILED
JAN 10 2023
SCOTT SCHWAB
SECRETARY OF STATE

Scott Schwab
Secretary of State

Jennifer Cook
Assistant Secretary of State

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS AND FISCAL MAPS

Landscape Analysis

The Task Force was charged with completing a landscape analysis of current early childhood programs and their locations throughout state government. Programming is widely dispersed across multiple state agencies. In many cases, programs are housed and administered by one agency, but funded by another. Moreover, some programs are administered by one agency but funded by two or more other agencies. This process creates challenges in ensuring compliance with funding sources, creates additional administrative hurdles, and requires intensive collaboration across agencies. In practice, the administration of a single program for children and families likely requires engagement from multiple program teams, multiple fiscal affairs, and multiple legal reviews by each of the agencies engaged with the administration or funding of the program. This creates a system of inefficiency where decision making authority and compliance are segmented into silos that slow down the administration of the services and make navigating state government systems more difficult for families and service providers.

Each of the four core agencies – KSDE, Children's Cabinet, DCF and KDHE - generated a list of programs and services that directly target children 0-5 or are designed to support systems that support the healthy development of these children. The table below shows the programs, funding levels and sources, the number of FTE staff, and the number of children or families a program serves. Utilizing this landscape analysis, the Task Force made recommendations on the consolidation and co-location of some of these programs (See Section X). Due to its length, the full Landscape Analysis is summarized below, but not included here. This document can be accessed here.

PROGRAM	CATEGORY	AUTHORITY	FUNDING	STAFFING	FAMILIES SERVED
Kansas State Department of Education					
Parents as Teachers	Home Visitation and Parent Education	Statutory (K.S.A 72-4161, 72-4163)	$9,437,635 (CIF)	1 FTE	2021-22: 8,128 (children) 6,114 (families)
Preschool Aged At-Risk	Preschool	Statutory (K.S.A 72-5154)	$22,384,089 (SGF)	0.5 FTE	2021-22: 9,513 (children)
Kansas Preschool Pilot	Preschool	Statutory (K.S.A 72-3215)	$4,200,000 (CIF) $4,132,317 (TANF)	0.5 FTE	2021-22: 4,963 (children)
State Enrollment Aid for Preschool Students with Disabilities	Preschool	Statutory (K.S.A 72-3215, 72-3410, 72-5132)	$14,026,233 (SGF)	1 FTE	2021-22: 5,961 (children)
State and Local Interagency Coordinating Councils	Governance	Statutory/Regulatory (K.S.A. 74-7801, 75-5648, 75-5649) (K.A.R. 28-4-565)	$43,000 (IDEA Part C) $7,000 (CCDF)	1 FTE	N/A
Ages and Stages Questionnaire	Developmental Screening	Regulatory (K.A.R. 91-31-32)	$165,000 (Contact)	N/A	2022: 88,104
Child and Adult Care Food Program	Food Assistance	Statutory (K.S.A. 72-17,132)	$29,371,945 (CNP-Federal USDA)	KSDE Child Nutrition and Wellness: 26 FTEs across all programs	2022: 3,870,480 breakfast, 4,090,361 lunch, 876,292 snacks, 5,020,735 snacks

Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund					
Children's Initiative Fund Grants (Early Childhood Block Grants)	Care and Education	Statutory (K.S.A. 38-1901)	$21,017,930 (CIF)	0.5 FTE	FY22: 6,719 (children) 5,968(families)
Imagination Library of Kansas	Early Literacy	Budget Line-Item Authority	$1,500,000 (CIF)	0 FTE	Fall 2023: over 69,000
Early Childhood Infrastructure	System Building	Budget Line-Item Authority	$1,400,733 (CIF)	0.5 FTE	N/A
Children's Cabinet Accountability Fund	Evaluation and Accountability	Statutory (K.S.A 38-2102, 38-2103)	$375,000 (CIF)	0 FTE	N/A
Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention	Prevention	Federal Statutory (Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act)	$1,453,531 (Federal Grant)	0.5 FTE	2022: 1,600 (children), 700 (caregivers)
Child Care Capacity Accelerator Grants	Care and Education	Federal (Pandemic Relief Program)	$55,018,294 (ARPA Discretionary, CCDF Discretionary, PDG Grant, and Private Funds)	1 FTE	N/A (Created 5,655 new slots)
Preschool Development Implementation Grant Birth-5	Care and Education	Federal (Grant Program)	$26,829,000 (Federal Grant)	1 FTE	N/A
Preschool Development Planning Grant Birth-5	Care and Education	Federal (Grant Program)	$4,000,000 (Federal Grant)	N/A (Same FTE as Implementation Grant)	N/A
Cabinet Administration	Administrative	Statutory (K.S.A. 38-1901)	$404,647 (KEY)	1.5 FTE	N/A
Workforce Registry	Workforce/ System Building	None (Created through Pandemic Relief Funds)	$3,000,000 (CCDF Discretionary)	0 FTE	N/A
Early Childhood Integrated Data System	System Building	None (Interagency Funding Transfer)	$800,000 (TANF)	0 FTE	N/A

Kansas Department for Children and Families					
Child Care Assistance	Care and Education	Federal and State Statutory (K.S.A. 39-7099(b)(16))	$79,336,620 (CCDF, SGF)	73.22 FTE	Feb. 2023: 12,273 (children)
Child Care Quality	Care and Education	Federal Statutory (CCDF State Plan)	$4,954,241 (CCDF) (Additional funds transferred to KDHE)	4 FTE	Various (Based in individual service)
Healthy Families America	Home Visitation	None	$2,997,916 (TANF)	2 FTE	FY22: 2,014 (families)
Head Start Collaboration Office	Coordination and Collaboration Between Head Start and the Broader State System	Federal Statutory	$102,551 (Federal Grant) $34,184 (SGF)	1 FTE	7,758 (children), 6,865 (families) Note that these figures reflect the number of children and families served by community-based Head Start grantees. The Head Start Collaboration Office does not provide direct services.
Kansas Early Head Start Child Care Partnership and Kansas Early Head Start Home Visitation	Child Care and Home Visitation	None	$5,233,327 (TANF) $7,506,797 (CCDF)	1 FTE	563 (Home Visitation), 387 (Child care)
Parent Skill-Building (Families First Prevention Services Act)-Parents as Teachers	Home Visitation and Parent Education	Federal Statutory	$1,000,000 (All Funds)	8 FTE	2022: 205 referrals
Parent Skill-Building (Families First Prevention Services Act)-Healthy Families America	Home Visitation	Federal Statutory	$795,613 (All Funds)	17 FTE	2023: 120 (estimate)
Parent Skill-Building (Families First Prevention Services Act)-Healthy Families America-2	Home Visitation	Federal Statutory	$395,475 (All Funds)	4 FTE	2023: 195 (estimate)
Family Preservation	Prevention	Statutory (CINC Code)	Various	90 FTE	2023: 1,500 (estimate)

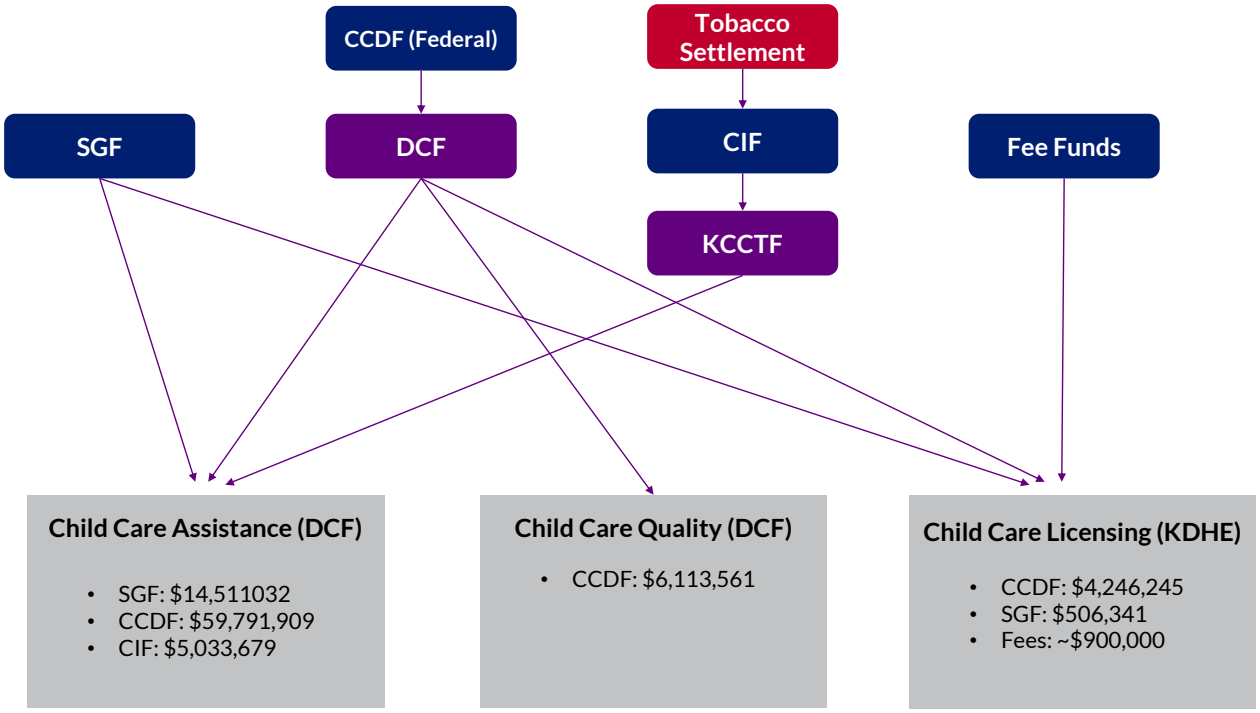
Kansas Department of Health and Environment					
Child Care Licensing and Early Youth Care Programs	Care and Education	Statutory (K.S.A. 65-501-65-535)	$4,246,254 (CCDF, SGF, Fees)	33 FTE	Total Licensed Capacity: 142,807 (8/2023)
Kansas Early Childhood Developmental Services (Part C)	Early Intervention	Federal Statutory	$16,200,000 (SGF, CIF, Federal)	6 FTE	11,000 (children
Newborn Hearing Screening Program	Screening	Statutory (K.S.A 65-1,157a)	$350,000 (HRSA, CDC)	3 FTE	36,207 (children)
Critical Congenital Heart Defect Program	Screening	Regulatory	Fee Funded	1 FTE	36,207 (children)
Birth Defects Program	Screening	Statutory and Regulatory	Fee Funded	1 FTE	680 (children)
Newborn Screening Metabolic Follow-Up Program	Screening	Regulatory (K.A.R. 65-101, 65-180, 65-181)	Fee Funded	6.5 FTE	3,858 (children)
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	Nutrition	Federal Statutory	$61,025,252 (Federal and Private)	16 FTE	80,413 (total)
Title V	Family and Child Health	Federal Statutory	$12,055,984 (Federal, State)	1 FTE	Unknown
Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Home Visiting/ Universal Home Visiting	Home Visiting	None	$1,650,000 (State)	1.6 FTE	2,047 (women)
Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)	Home Visiting	Federal Statutory	$4,748,053 (Federal and State Match)	3 FTE	631 (children), 566 (caregivers)
Maternal Community Health Worker Pilot Project	Workforce	None	$696,425 (Grants)	N/A	304 (families)

Kansas Special Health Care Needs Program	Family and Child Health	Statutory (K.S.A. 28-4-406, K.S.A. 65-5a01,5a05,5a08-16, K.S.A. 65-101, K.S.A. 65-180)	$642,089 (Federal MCH Grant)	6 FTE	281 (children)
Bridges	Family and Child Health	Federal (Title V State Plan)	$50,000 (PDG)	0.65 FTE	30 (clients)
Holistic Care Coordination	Family and Child Health	Federal (Title V State Plan)	$57,600 (Federal MCH Grant)	1 FTE	224 (clients)
Primary Care Provider Care Coordination Expansion Project	Family and Child Health	Federal (Title V State Plan)	PDG Funded	N/A	3 (providers)
Supporting You	Parent Education	Federal (Title V State Plan)	$45,000 (Federal MCH Grant)	0.5 FTE	100 (participants)
Help Me Grow	Family and Child Health	Federal (Title V State Plan)	$700,000 (state funds)	N/A	Unknown
School Based Health Center Program	Family and Child Health	Federal (Title V State Plan)	$3,621,527 (Federal)	N/A	Unknown
CARE Program	Family and Child Health	Statutory (K.S.A 38-2002, K.S.A 38-2226)	$757,000 (SGF)	2 FTE	N/A
Kansas Perinatal Community Collaborative	Family and Child Health	None	Federal MCH Grant	2 FTE	543 (individuals)

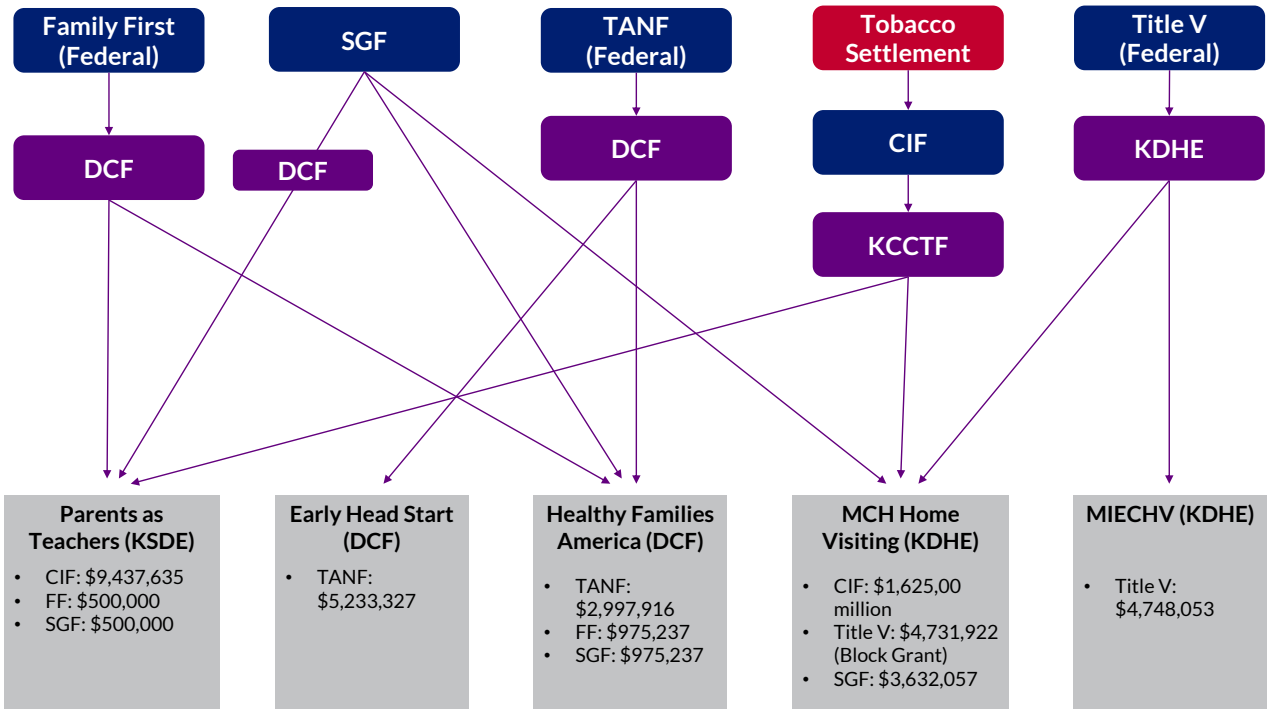
Fiscal Maps

The Task Force completed fiscal maps tracking the various funding sources used for specific early childhood programs. These three programmatic categories are child care, pre-k, and home visiting—all of which are funded from a variety of sources and move through multiple state agencies before reaching children and families. The number of sources (arrows) in the maps below illustrate the fragmented fiscal picture and the duplication of administered services needed to distribute funds. Communities and community-based organizations and other early childhood and education partners must then piece together funding and bear the burden and costs of a fragmented system.

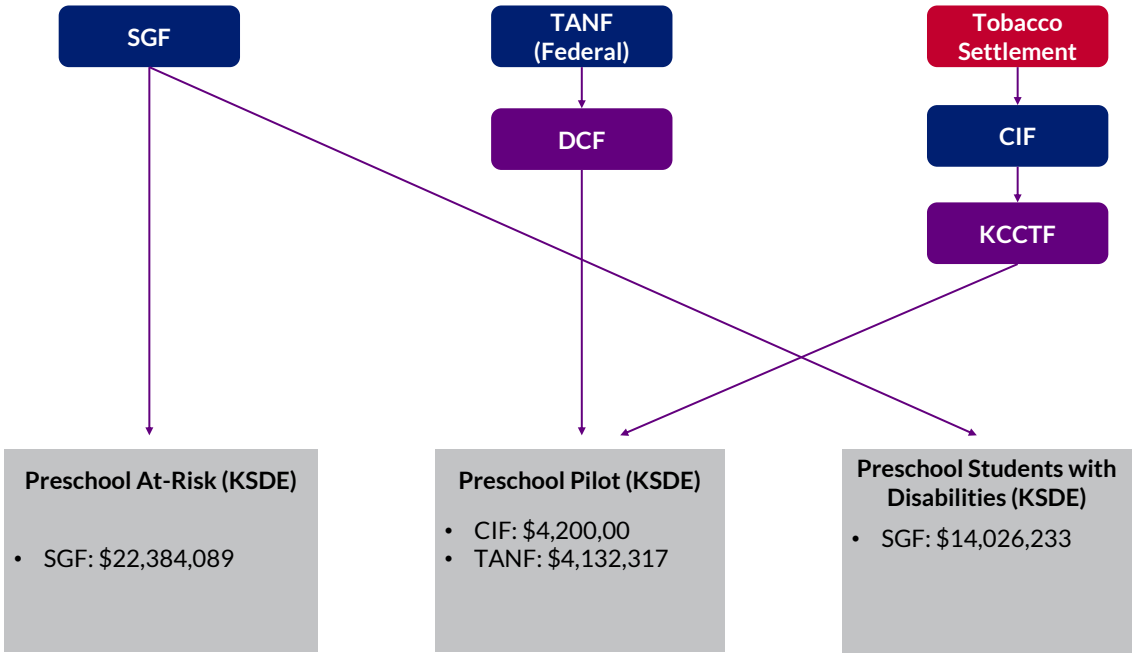
Child Care Fiscal Map



Home Visiting Fiscal Map



Preschool Fiscal Map



DATA AND METRICS LOGIC MODEL

To accompany the specific metrics identified in the Task Force's recommendations, the following logic model was created to track system progress and illustrate how changing Kansas' governance structure can create better outcomes for children, families, and communities. Utilizing a model like this one can assist the new entity in planning and implementing programs and services. This model is not intended to be binding, but instead provide an example for what the state should strive towards as it unifies oversight of early childhood programs. The model attempts to align the specific actions the Task Force recommends with the outcomes and metrics it believes are vital to creating a more effective and efficient early childhood system.

Foundational Values

"All Kansas children—especially those between zero and five years of age—deserve healthy childhoods that are supported by a robust early childhood system which improves outcomes and effectively provides high-quality early care and education, adapts to the needs of families and communities, and is equitably accessible to all communities across the state."

Children and Families	Service Provider	Communities
Children (0-5)	Child Care	Private Businesses
Parents	Providers	Philanthropy
Guardians	Home Visitors	Community
Grandparents	Other Service	Organizations and
	Providers	Local
		Governments

Activities, Initiatives, and Programs

Child and Family Services	Provider Workforce Development	Community and Business Services
Colocation of child care assistance, child care quality, and child care licensing	Colocation of child care assistance, child care quality and professional development, and child care licensing	Creation of single point of entry for business and community needs in early childhood sector
Consolidation of home visitation programming into one state agency	Streamlined authority for planning, funding alignment, procurement, and overall early childhood system administration	Development of intentional outreach program to provide support for businesses and communities looking to partner for the provision of services
Streamlined authority for planning, funding alignment, procurement, and overall early childhood system administration		

Outcomes

Short Term Outcomes (3-6 months)

- Decrease in the time it takes for families to become enrolled in child care assistance
- Decrease in wait times and number of requests for families to receive technical assistance with child care subsidy
- Streamlined funding and expanded access/availability of home visitation programs across the state
- Single point of access to early childhood programs and resources
- Decrease in the time it takes for providers to enroll in and accept child care assistance
- Decrease in wait times and number of requests for providers to receive technical assistance with child care assistance
- Decrease in the amount of time required to fully license a child care program
- Maintain or increase technical and operational support (subsidy reimbursement, wage supplements, other supports) for child care and home visitation programs
- Increase in number of digital fingerprinting locations across the state and decreased time between receiving fingerprints and the completion of a background check
- Increased number of businesses and community organizations inquiring for state support in the development of early childhood services for their workforce
- Increased number of businesses building child care and other services into their economic development plans
- Increase in the number of economic development plans that include child care when incentive packages are negotiated

Medium Term Outcomes (6-18 months)

- Increased number of families receiving child care assistance
- Increased number of children and families participating in home visiting programs
- Increased number of children and families accessing and enrolling in early childhood programs and supports
- Increased number of child care programs accepting child care assistance
- Increased number of licensed child care slots and child care programs
- Increased median wage for child care workers and family support professionals (home visitors)
- Increased number of individuals working in the early childhood field
- Increase in the number of active community-level child care coalitions
- Increase in the number public-private partnerships providing or supplementing the costs of child care

Long Term Outcomes (18 months and beyond)

- Increased access to affordable, quality child care for low- and moderate-income families
- Increase in federal funding (CCDF) pulled down for early childhood programs
- Increased enrollment in pre-k programs
- Improved Kindergarten readiness
- Decreased number of children under 5 entering the child welfare system
- Decrease in mortality for children under 5
- Decreased number of child care facilities that close
- Improved revenue/stability for child care programs
- Increased retention of child care programs, child care staff, and family support professionals
- # of children enrolled in child care = desired child care capacity (centers)
- Increased educational attainment of licensed providers
- Increased number of providers attaining higher levels of career progression following initial employment
- Increased number of students enrolled in postsecondary early childhood programs
- Increase in the number of community child care programs/ projects
- Increased number of jobs retained statewide

Inputs and Contextual Factors

- **Successful consolidation of state services**
- **Increased funding for early childhood system**
- **Development of public-private partnerships**
- **Increased support for state staffing and operations**
- **Federal funding and policy implications**
- **Community-level capacity**

INTERIM REPORT OF THE KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION TASK FORCE

CREATING AN EFFICIENT SYSTEM FOR KANSAS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

On January 10, 2023, Governor Laura Kelly signed Executive Order 23-01, creating the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force and tasking the group with creation of a *"framework for a model single-agency governance structure for early childhood programming that consolidates initiatives and funding under the leadership of a new cabinet-level position."* A final report from the Task Force, due to the Governor on January 1, 2024, will include recommendations and draft legislation designed to create an early childhood cabinet agency for the state.

This interim report provides essential background, summarizes the Task Force's work to date, and lays out the next steps for the committee's work.

Governor Laura Kelly outlines charges to the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force, alongside co-chairs Cornelia Stevens and Sam Huenergardt, during the group's first meeting on March 31, 2023.

BACKGROUND

State governments are responsible for a wide variety of programs supporting young children and their families – many of them federally funded. Thanks, in part, to the traditional disbursement of health, education, and human service dollars from federal agencies to their state-level counterparts, it is not uncommon for states to see programs for young children spread across multiple departments.

While this methodology may seem reasonable from a fiscal perspective, the resulting state systems are often fragmented and siloed, resulting in duplication of effort and failure to sufficiently coordinate and optimize taxpayer resources. Perhaps most concerningly, these systems can result in indecipherable mazes for families, challenging them to navigate multiple layers of bureaucracy to access time-sensitive services during their children's most formative years of development.

For this reason, many states – Kansas included - have begun to reexamine the governance of their early childhood programs, seeking to reduce the number of agencies in which they are housed, or - in a growing number of cases - creating consolidated early childhood cabinet agencies charged with the administration of all such programs.

States have approached this task in a number of different ways, with many having already undertaken this work years – or even decades - ago. Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning, for example, was established under Governor Sonny Perdue (R) in 2004. Alabama's Department of Early Childhood Education followed in 2005 under the leadership of Governor Bob Riley (R), while Arkansas created its Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (housed within the state's Department of Human Services) during the administration of Governor Asa Hutchinson (R) in 2017.

This trend toward consolidation has only accelerated in recent years. In 2019, New Mexico lawmakers passed legislation creating the state's new Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD), a stand-alone cabinet

agency under the supervision of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham (D), housing all of the state's major early childhood programs. Similar legislation in Colorado and Oregon has recently enabled the creation of new early childhood departments. In neighboring Missouri, Governor Mike Parson (R) issued an executive order in January of 2021 consolidating the state's major early childhood programs into a new division of the state's existing Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, known as the Office of Childhood.

Other states are taking more incremental approaches, moving individual programs into agencies better equipped to coordinate their administration with other offerings.

In early 2023, the Bipartisan Policy Center issued a report on the relative efficiency and coordination of state early childhood systems, ranking Kansas 49th in the nation. The state's weak showing is a reflection of its existing structure, in which programs for young children are housed across four major units of government, housed within three separate state agencies: the Kansas State Department of Education (which also serves as the administrative home of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund), the Kansas Department for Children and Families, and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP (as of July 1, 2023)

Barry Downing, Wichita—Honorary Chair

Cornelia Stevens, Wichita—Co-Chair

Sam Huenergardt, Shawnee—Co-Chair

Secretary Laura Howard, Topeka

Secretary Janet Stanek, Topeka

Melissa Rooker, Fairway

Amanda Petersen, Lawrence

Sara Bloom, Hays

Lona Duvall, Garden City

Kelly Davydov, Overland Park

Betsy Wearing, Salina

Jennifer Adhima, Lawrence

David Jordan, Hutchinson

Monica Murnan, Pittsburg

Senator Pat Pettey, Kansas City

Senator Brenda Dietrich, Topeka

Representative Susan Ruiz, Shawnee

Representative Troy Waymaster, Bunker Hill

Executive Order 23-01 advances Kansas to the forefront of this national conversation, seeking to reform and streamline the state's existing structure in favor of a single agency approach.

PROCESS AND WORK TO DATE

On February 21, 2023, Governor Kelly announced both the appointed membership of the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force (text box at left indicates Task Force membership at time of announcement and issuance of this interim report) and plans for the group to receive staffing support from The Hunt Institute, a North Carolina-based education policy support founded in 2001 by four-term NC Governor Jim Hunt.

As of this writing, the group has held two in-person meetings at the Kansas State Capitol and a nine-city stakeholder feedback tour during the final week of June 2023.

MEETING ONE: THE KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD LANDSCAPE (March 31, 2023)

Executive Order 23-01 not only established the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force, but detailed the broad parameters of its work, beginning with a requirement that the Task Force conduct *"an analysis of the current early childhood service delivery system in Kansas and how it is financed – with a specific focused on gaps, inefficiencies, and redundancies."*

In an effort to jumpstart this complex process, The Hunt Institute worked alongside staff from the administration, the four major child serving entities and Task Force co-chairs Cornelia Stevens

and Sam Huenergardt to develop a written process for inventorying the state's early childhood program offerings. A template was subsequently provided to the agencies, asking them to inventory (in advance of the Task Force's first meeting on March 31, 2023) the programs under their purviews, to include a brief description of each, alongside data on their funding and funding type, number of clients served, current levels of staffing, enabling authority, and potential gaps, inefficiencies, and opportunities for reform.

The result was an 81-page written inventory detailing 50 distinct early childhood program offerings spread across these four major units of government. This document was distributed to Task Force members in advance of Meeting 1 and was the primary focus of the group's first meeting. While a more detailed description of these programs can be found in the written inventory, state agencies highlighted the following programs as requiring significant coordination and collaboration across agency or as a possible duplication of services:

STATE ENTITY	HIGHLIGHTED PROGRAMS
Kansas State Department of Education	• Kansas Parent as Teachers • Preschool-Aged At-Risk • Kansas Preschool Pilot • Interagency Coordinating Councils • Child and Adult Care Food Program
Kansas Children's Cabinet & Trust Fund	• CIF Grants (Early Childhood Block Grants) • Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention • Preschool Development Grants • Workforce Registry
Kansas Department for Children and Families	• Childcare Assistance • Childcare Quality • Head Start Collaboration Office and Early Head Start • Various home visiting programs
Kansas Department for Health and Environment	• Childcare Licensing • Early Childhood Developmental Services • Newborn Screening Program • Supplemental Nutrition Program (WIC) • Title V Services • Various home visiting programs

Following an opening charge to the group from Governor Kelly and process overview from The Hunt Institute, 30 minutes apiece were allocated to the Kansas State Department of Education, the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, the Kansas Department for Children and Families, and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to provide an overview of their agency offerings, reflections on the prospect of a streamlined governance structure and opportunities for reform.

Through their presentations, each entity identified the following challenges, inefficiencies, and gaps in the current system:

STATE ENTITY	CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED
Kansas State Department of Education	• Need to improve coordination and delivery of home visiting/parent education services across models. • Streamline funding mechanisms, especially for programs that receive funds from multiple sources. • Required coordination between school district, state agencies, and other service providers to deliver childcare, preschool, and Head Start services. • Coordination between state agencies required to provide and fund services, especially for federally funded programs and programs that serve overlapping populations.
Kansas Children's Cabinet & Trust Fund	• Need for a single steward of the early childhood system. • No formal decision-making authority across all-state agencies. • Need to align and direct funding and programmatic investments to address full needs of the mixed delivery system. • Lack of contractual alignment for professional development, technical assistance, and evaluation that is baked into procurement processes. • Need to improve coordination and navigation between state/local needs and federal guidelines. • Need to bolster supports for all early childhood workers across the mixed delivery system. • Need to modernize state data infrastructure and rapid response to integrated data requests. • Need for a modernized and consolidated data system that eases community and program reporting burdens and equips decision-makers.
Kansas Department for Children and Families	• Lack of single access point for families seeking care. • Lack of streamlined access and support for childcare providers • Lack of common referral structure. • Inconsistent state-level marketing and public outreach. • Need to build capacity for universal home visiting. • Need to advance common goals and best practices for age exclusive sets of 0-3 and 0-5 by blending and leveraging these age groups. • Optimizing funding streams towards common goals. • Need to better leverage federal CCDF funds. • Need for streamlined administrative and reporting procedures.

	• Need for unified planning across state agencies and with external stakeholders and service providers. • Building capacity for early childhood workforce pipeline and additional workforce support. • Strengthening relationships between the state and business community to meet the state workforce needs by addressing childcare gaps.
Kansas Department for Health and Environment	• Need for streamlined funding processes to better address the challenges of funding individual programs from multiple sources. • Public confusion over which state agencies lead on specific programs or services. • Inadequate and outdated information technology and data systems. • Complicated process of regulating facilities on state and local level with multiple governmental entities involved in ensuring compliance.

While these level-setting presentations to the Task Force left limited time for group discussion, the group's closing conversation (and written inventory) highlighted the immense complexity of the state's existing system and uplifted at least one practical example of systemic inefficiency – home visiting programs – in which each of the four departments appear to have some active connection as either a funder or direct service provider, resulting in what one Task Force member noted are complex and duplicative reporting requirements for programs being supported by multiple public revenue sources.

MEETING TWO: LESSONS FROM OTHER STATES (May 16, 2023)

In addition to requiring the Task Force to assess the state's existing early childhood landscape, Executive Order 23-01 directs the group to consider lessons learned from other states that have already taken steps to consolidate early childhood system governance under a single agency approach like that being contemplated by Kansas. This was the focus of the group's second in-person meeting, held May 16, 2023. After receiving a brief opening presentation by former National Teacher of the Year, Kansas' Tabatha Rosproy (who holds the distinction of being the first and only prekindergarten teacher to be honored with this title), the group received presentations from a pair of sister states, Missouri (Dr. Pam Thomas, Assistant Commissioner, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) and Colorado (Dr. Lisa Roy, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Early Childhood and Michael Cooke, Early Childhood Transition Director), both of which have recently launched consolidated structures.

In advance of the meeting, Task Force members received a side-by-side comparison detailing the different approaches taken by the two states. An abridged summary of that side-by-side comparison, including Kansas' system, is included here:

	MISSOURI OFFICE OF CHILDHOOD	COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD	KANSAS COORDINATED EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM
Method of Creation	Executive Order 21-02	HB 21-1304 (Legislation)	Executive Reorganization Orders, Constitutional Amendments, and Legislation
Organizational Structure	Consolidation into an existing state agency: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	Creation of a new cabinet agency: Colorado Department of Early Childhood	Coordinated system between Kansas State Department of Education, Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, Kansas Department for Children and Families, and Kansas Department of Health and Environment
Leadership	Assistant Commissioner	Executive Director	Commissioner of Education, Children's Cabinet members and Executive Director, and Cabinet Secretaries
Governance	Assistant Commissioner reports to the Commissioner of Education (appointed by the Governor) and the State Board of Education (appointed by the Governor and confirmed by Senate)	Executive Director is a cabinet-level position appointed by and reporting to the Governor	Commissioner of Education is appointed by the State Board of Education (who are popularly elected); Executive Director is hired as a state employee, Cabinet Secretaries are appointed by the Governor, confirmed by the Senate, and serve at the Governor's pleasure
Creation Timeline	Executive Order 21-02 was issued on January 28, 2021, establishing the Office of Childhood with an effective/operational date of August 28, 2021 (7 month ramp up period). Office integration efforts began April 1, 2021. This integration was completed on August 13, 2021.	HB 21-1304 was signed into law by Governor Jared Polis on June 23, 2021. The law established an effective/operational date of July 1, 2022 (1 year ramp up period). A subsequent bill, HB 22-1197 advanced the agency's start date to March 1, 2022, to allow for the hiring of key staff in advance of the July 1 "go-live" date. An interagency agreement with the CO Department of Human Services covers several administrative processes including payroll and invoicing, that weren't ready to transition when CDEC launched. This	Article 6 of the Kansas Constitution establishes the role of the Kansas State Board of Education. A State Department of Education was first created in 1915. The Kansas legislature authorized school districts to administer preschool programs in 1965 and parent education programs in 1990. The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund was first created in 1980, dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. In 1999, the Kansas legislature established the Cabinet by statute to oversee expenditures from the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement. The Kansas Department for Children and Families was first

		agreement will end on September 30, 2023.	established within the former Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services in 1973. Following restructuring the current Department for Children and Families was established in 2012. Since its inception, the Department has had oversight of childhood initiatives, public assistance programs, and child welfare. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment was created in 1974, charged with protecting the health "of all Kansans." The agency oversees childcare licensing, which was first authorized by the Kansas legislature in 1919. The licensing program at KDHE was strengthened in 2010 with the passage of "Lexie's Law."

Among the key lessons spotlighted by invited resource experts were:

- Timeline and Transition Staffing: Consolidating governmental services is a complex and labor-intensive process that requires a carefully planned transition. It involves not only the thoughtful integration of programs, but consideration of how and where program data is collected and stored, how these programs are made accessible to the public, and the blending of multiple agency cultures – even as the programs being transitioned must remain functional and accessible throughout the transition period.

  Logistically, the consolidation of staff into a single agency presents challenges related to payroll and human resources, information technology, the co-location of staff, and more. While none of these challenges is insurmountable, the identification of a reasonable transition timeline and dedicated staff charged with overseeing the transition is critical. In Colorado, an early childhood transition director was hired (on a time-limited basis) within the governor's office and charged with overseeing the process, before handing off to the functional agency's new executive director. In Missouri, an existing leader within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education was tapped both to oversee the transition and lead the new division.

  Some states planning single agency consolidation processes (Oregon) have sought legislative approval to extend the initial timeline. Participants emphasized that it is more important that services and payments flow seamlessly to families and providers than it is to meet an arbitrary transition deadline.

- Transparently engage key stakeholders in the process: Because the primary rationale for consolidation is often an improved experience for children, families, and providers, it is important to use the transition planning process to hear directly from key stakeholders about their past/current experiences within the system and how a consolidated structure might lend itself to greater efficiency In Missouri, the Parson

administration arranged for both a stakeholder advisory committee and focus groups – both facilitated by The Hunt Institute – to gather these insights and plan for the Office of Childhood's ongoing engagement with key audiences.

- Take time to involve all consolidated programs in the change management process: Ultimately the proposed process will entail a complex business merger. In addition to gathering external stakeholder feedback, the thoughtful inclusion of transferring program staff is critical to a successful transition.

  Transitions of this sort, while highly beneficial, naturally create a level of unease and anxiety among staff who may find themselves not only within a new agency, but with differing levels of authority, new supervisors, and expectations to reconsider and change what may be longstanding program policies in which they may have personal investment/pride in authorship. Successfully launching a consolidated agency will require not only time, but the identification of dynamic and skillful leaders, sensitive to the fact that their first measure of success will be blending multiple agency cultures into a seamless, unified system in which *all* decisions must support the needs of Kansas children and families.

- Ensuring adequate budgeting for needed staff positions: In theory, the creation of a new organizational structure to house existing government programs should not entail extensive new cost, as the resources used to support these programs already exist and should transfer with them. In practice, however, it can be difficult to disentangle and reallocate all resources used to support these programs within their current administrative homes. While program staff are easily identified for transfer, it is important to also consider all of the administrative and infrastructure supports that enable these programs - which range from human resources and IT, to payroll, accounts payable/receivable and more. A well-considered transition plan will ensure the transfer of both the programmatic and administrative resources necessary to ensure success of the new agency, while likewise considering the remaining needs of the agencies from which these programs will be transferred. And though a carefully crafted plan should minimize new costs, startup agencies routinely require some level of new/additional funding to ensure full staffing and a successful launch.

- Ensure intentional and consistent communication, both internally and externally: Whether with internal or external stakeholders, intentional and consistent communication is key to building trust and should be prioritized throughout the transition process (and beyond).

- Data systems are critical: Among the most challenging aspects of program integration is the alignment of data collection systems. Due, in part, to the wide array of local, state, and federal revenue streams supporting the nation's early childhood programs, many utilize siloed data collection systems, incapable of connecting with one another. Investment in a unified data collection system to house all new agency data is well-advised but can be both costly and time-consuming. This is an issue to begin exploring sooner, rather than later as the state considers reform.

- Carefully analyze federal requirements and funding streams: One factor that often prevents meaningful systems reform is a general sense that "things can't be done differently, because the feds require it this way." This is often not the case, with federal regulations providing significantly more flexibility to the states than sometimes acknowledged – and federal agencies routinely working with states to identify innovative solutions. Careful analysis of federal programmatic and funding requirements can create opportunities to "blend and braid" funding streams, resulting in both greater program access and more optimal use of

taxpayer resources. Use the transition process to reexamine old ways of thinking and consider new possibilities.

- **Determine metrics to evaluate efficiency and effectiveness of consolidated system:** One challenge identified through conversations with Missouri and Colorado was the difficulty in determining and setting metrics for a "successful" consolidated early childhood system. Critical analysis of state-level consolidation is essential to ensuring that families, communities, and service providers are navigating a new system with greater ease because most states have been motivated to consolidated systems based on feedback that communities have experienced significant difficulty working through siloed or fragmented processes. New or consolidated agencies must find ways to ensure that transformations of early childhood systems are having their intended effect—increasing efficiency, creating a return on investment, and delivering improved outcomes for the populations they serve. Determining the metrics and evaluating those systems has proven difficult given many states do not have a baseline to operate from and cannot fully compare changes caused by the consolidation of services.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOUR (June 27-30, 2023)

In accordance with the requirements set out by Executive Order 23-01 (and as recommended by sister state leaders), the Early Childhood Transition Task Force recently held listening sessions designed to engage community stakeholders. Over the course of four days, the Task Force hosted regional meetings in 9 Kansas communities (Chanute, Wichita, Garden City, Hays, Salina, Manhattan, Topeka, Overland Park, and Kansas City). Each session began with a short overview of the Task Force's work and charge, then transitioned participants into facilitated small group discussions centered around a set of three guiding questions:

1. What challenges, gaps, or barriers have you and your community faced while navigating the early childhood system? What are the greatest needs you and your community are facing?

2. What services and programs are currently working on the local level and serve as bright spots for progress in supporting young children and families? What innovation is occurring in your community that could become models for practice in other regions and statewide?

3. How would you evaluate the state's efficiency in providing support to you and your community in the early childhood sector? How has the State of Kansas—and the programs it operates—contributed to your successes and challenges? (For example, how has the state's operation of childcare licensing, home visiting, childcare subsidy, or other programs impacted your experience navigating the system?)

Notetakers in each small group captured stakeholder feedback. Participants were also provided with note cards – and a contact address at The Hunt Institute - through which to share additional perspectives. Following small group discussion of these three questions, participants shared summaries of their discussions and responses.

An overview of the feedback generated from these community listening sessions will be synthesized and shared in the Task Force's final report.

NEXT STEPS

The Task Force is scheduled to meet next in Topeka on August 17th, 2023, for a facilitated work session during which The Hunt Institute will share a synthesis of lessons learned from the listening tour and initial meetings, then guide participants in the formulation of an initial set of recommendations for use in compiling an initial draft of the group's final report for review during its fourth meeting on October 18th, 2023. The draft and the recommendations contained will be the topic of discussion during the October meeting, following which member feedback will be used to create a proposed final draft and required sample legislation enacting the group's recommendations.

The Task Force hopes to deliver its final report to Governor Kelly in December 2023, prior to the deadline of January 1st, 2024, set forth in Executive Order 23-01. Following the delivery of the final report and any additional sample legislation, Governor Kelly will determine how her administration will proceed and utilize the Task Force's recommendations to improve the early childhood system in Kansas.

ADDITIONAL TASK FORCE RESOURCES CAN BE ACCESSED BY CLICKING HERE.

AGENDA *MARCH 31, 2023*

1:00 - 1:20 PM | **WELCOME AND CHARGE TO THE COMMITTEE**

- **The Honorable Laura Kelly,** Governor of Kansas
- **Cornelia Stevens,** Co-Chair, Executive Director, TOP Early Learning Centers
- **Sam Huenergardt,** Co-Chair, President/CEO, Mid-America Region, AdventHealth

1:20 – 1:30 PM | **MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS**

1:30 – 2:00 PM | **ORIENTATION FOR TASK FORCE MEMBERS**

- **Dr. Dan Wuori,** Senior Director of Early Learning, The Hunt Institute

- Introduction to The Hunt Institute
- The National Early Childhood Governance Landscape
- Executive Order 23-01
- Responsibilities of the Task Force
- Review of Timeline and Process
- Q&A

2:00 - 2:15 PM | **BREAK**

KANSAS' EARLY CHILDHOOD LANDSCAPE

2:15 – 2:45 PM | **KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

- **Amanda Petersen,** Director of Early Childhood, Kansas State Department of Education

2:45 – 3:15 PM | **KANSAS CHILDREN'S CABINET AND TRUST FUND**

- **Melissa Rooker,** Executive Director, Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund

3:15 – 3:45 PM | **DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

The Honorable Laura Howard, Secretary, Kansas Department for Children and Families

3:45 – 4:15 PM | **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT**

The Honorable Janet Stanek, Secretary, Kansas Department of Health and Environment

4:15 – 4:30 PM | **CLOSING AND NEXT STEPS**

AGENDA *MAY 16TH, 2023*

10:00 – 10:10 AM

WELCOMING REMARKS

Cornelia Stevens
Co-Chair

Sam Huenergardt
Co-Chair

10:10 – 10:40 AM

WHAT THE TASK FORCE'S WORK MEANS FOR KANSAS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Tabatha Rosproy
2020 National Teacher of the Year
Early Childhood Project Coordinator
Kansas Parent Information Resource Center

10:40 – 11:40 AM

CONSOLIDATION LESSONS FROM OTHER STATES

Dr. Pam Thomas
Assistant Commissioner, Office of Childhood, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Dr. Lisa Roy
Executive Director, Colorado Department of Early Childhood

11:40 – 12:00 PM

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

All

KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION TASK FORCE

Meeting Three Agenda

Thursday, August 17, 2023 – 1:00 – 3:00pm

Kansas State Capitol (Old Supreme Court Chamber)

1:00 – 1:10 PM	Welcoming Remarks Introductions of New Members	Sam Huenergardt Cornelia Stevens Co-Chairs
1:10-1:40 PM	Presentation on Stakeholder Engagement Tour	Hunt Institute and KU-CPPR
1:40-1:50 PM	Short Break	
1:50 – 2:50 PM	Task Force Discussion	ALL

- What are your greatest concerns about moving forward with a single, cabinet agency concept? What might be done proactively to address them?
- Are there specific programs that should or should not be moved in your estimation? Why should they be included/omitted?
- What are the metrics by which we should measure the success of a transition for children and families?
- On what timeline would such a transition be feasible? How should the transition process be staffed? What systems would need to be ready and "live" on day one to ensure a seamless transition for families, service providers, and staff?

2:50 – 3:00 PM	Outline Ad Hoc Work Group Structure Next Steps	

KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION TASK FORCE

Meeting Four Agenda
Wednesday, October 18, 2023 – 1:00 – 3:00pm
Kansas State Capitol (Old Supreme Court Chamber)

1:00 – 1:10 PM	Welcoming Remarks	Sam Huenergardt Cornelia Stevens Co-Chairs
1:10-2:30 PM	Presentation and Discussion of Work Group Recommendations • Programs • Transition Logistics • Metrics and Data	All
2:30 PM – 3:00 PM	Review and Discussion of Final Report Outline	Dr. Dan Wuori
3:00 PM	Adjourn	

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.

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.

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.

#49 Kansas

KS Score: 17

Average score: 38.6

76%

KS drew down 76% of federal child care funds

DC	1
MN	2
MD	3
AR	3
MI	5
NM	5
OR	5
GA	8
MA	8
ME	10
WA	10
CT	12
CO	13
NC	13
PA	15
LA	16
VT	17
WI	17
AK	19
DE	19
IN	19
OK	22
UT	23
FL	23
VA	23
NE	23
MT	27
ND	27
KY	29
CA	29
RI	29
SC	29
IL	33
OH	33
IA	35
WV	35
AL	37
NH	37
NY	39
NV	40
MO	41
HI	41
TN	43
TX	44
AZ	45
ID	45
NJ	45
MS	48
KS	**49**
SD	50
WY	50

Creating a Coordinated, Integrated Early Care and Education System: State Early Childhood Administration

In 2018, the Bipartisan Policy Center examined how states oversee federal and state funding dedicated to early childhood education, or ECE, programs. Now in 2021, we revisit each state system to understand enacted improvements and emerging challenges in state governance.

As the country adjusts to a new reality of work and home life amid the pandemic, American families are faced with the challenge of finding and affording quality child care, now more than ever. Early learning operates within a fragile business model, in which services cost more than most families can afford to pay. For this reason, states must administer funding with efficiency and effectiveness to ensure families are able to access programs and to maximize the reach of federal and state investments.

States are now responsible to distributing recent COVID-19 relief funding for child care—allocated through three successive relief packages by Congress in 2020—in addition to established funding streams that support multiple early childhood programs. The relief packages are intended to stabilize the fragile system that challenged access to affordable, reliable care. State governments are tasked with coordinating and combining the many different ECE funding streams allocated to them.

For all but one federal program, governors have wide discretion with regard to the administration and coordination of early childhood funding. The Bipartisan Policy Center set out to re-examine the issues of state governance, coordination, and integration by reviewing how states are meeting requirements set by federal statutes and agencies, as well as how states are capitalizing on the opportunity to create efficiency through their governance structures.

With this in mind, BPC is making recommendations at the federal and state level with an eye towards further reducing duplication and improving results for families. These recommendations are summarized in the full report. The following summarizes the findings for Kansas.

More state data, including funding levels and demographic information, can be found at https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/national-child-care/.

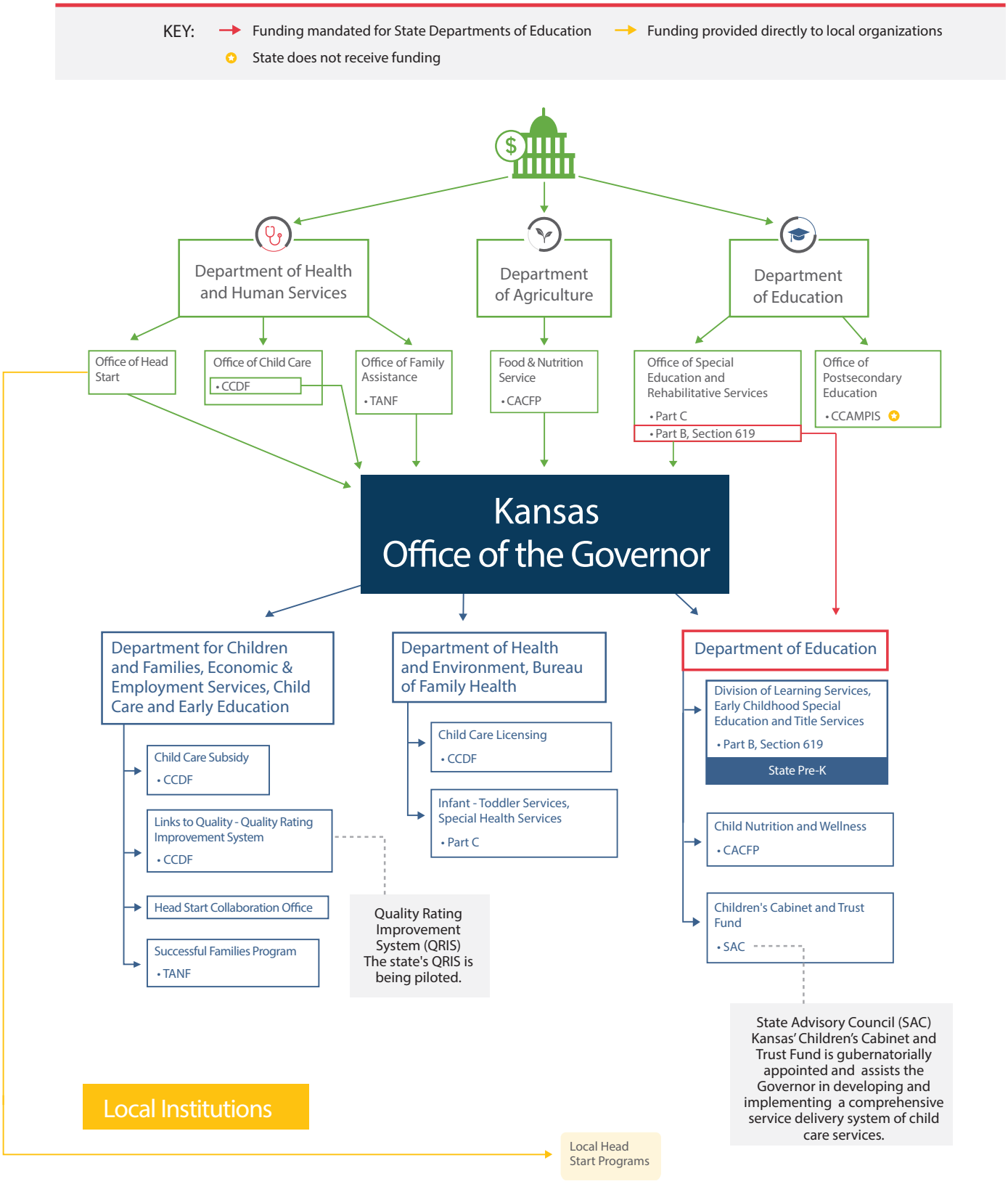
STRENGTHS OF KANSAS' EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Kansas established of a new State Advisory Council (SAC) for Early Education and Care, as mandated by the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KANSAS' EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Facilitate cross-agency communication to ensure seamless coordination and transition for IDEA Part C (infants/toddlers) and Part B, Section 619 (3-5 year olds).
- Increase efficiency and cost-effectiveness of monitoring and oversight by aligning the administration of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) with state Pre-K and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.
- Improve program alignment and efficiency by colocating CCDF with state Pre-K and Head Start Collaboration Office.
- Provide support for the establishment of a new State Advisory Council (SAC) for Early Education and Care, as mandated by the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, and ensure the SAC is fulfilling its required activities, including conducting a statewide needs assessment on the quality and availability of early care and learning programs.

Flow of Federal Early Childhood Funds: Kansas



ECE Funding in Kansas

Funding from Nine GAO-Identified Programs	FY 2019 Funding	FY 2020 Funding	FY 2021 Funding
CCDF Expenditure	$62,803,793	$106,660,968	$517,551,425
Transfer from TANF	$0	$0	-
Head Start Allocation	$75,832,939	-	-
Head Start			
Early Head Start			
IDEA Part C, Allocation (infant/toddler)	$4,283,727	$4,298,980	$6,137,925
IDEA Part B, Section 619 Allocation (3–5 years)	$4,443,384	$4,474,058	$6,717,083
CCAMPIS Grants	$541,088	$541,088	$460,460
Additional ECE Funding Streams	**FY 2016 Funding**	**FY 2020 Funding**	**FY 2021 Funding**
TANF Child Care Expenditure (Direct)	$6,673,024	$6,673,024	-
TANF Pre-K / Head Start Expenditure	$17,989,945	$18,374,856	-
CACFP Allocation	$28,428,368	$24,254,250	$24,388,703

BPC Reviewed

BPC reviewed the following federally-funded programs to assess the efficiency and integration of Kansas's early care and education system.

- Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)
- Head Start
- Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)
- Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (IDEA Part C)
- Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5)
- Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities (IDEA Part B, Section 619)
- Promise Neighborhoods
- Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP)
- Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge

Number of Children Under Age 6

UNDER 3
104,863

3-4 YEARS OLD
72,704

5 YEARS OLD
37,526

Percentage of Children in Poverty
13.4%

EARLY CHILDHOOD GOVERNANCE IN MISSOURI AND COLORADO: A COMPARISON

	MISSOURI OFFICE OF CHILDHOOD	COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD
Administration	Governor Mike Parson (Republican)	Governor Jared Pollis (Democrat)
Method of Creation	Executive Order 21-02	HB 21-1304 (Legislation)
Organizational Structure	Consolidation into an existing state agency: MO Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	Creation of a new cabinet agency: Colorado Department of Early Childhood
Leadership	Assistant Commissioner Dr. Pam Thomas	Executive Director Lisa Roy
Governance	Commissioner Margie Vandeven (appointed by Governor) and State Board of Education (8 members appointed by Governor and confirmed by Senate)	Dr. Roy is a cabinet director reporting directly to Governor Pollis.
Creation Timeline	Executive Order 21-02 was issued on January 28, 2021, establishing the Office of Childhood with an effective/operational date of August 28, 2021 (7 month ramp up period). Following a 60-day waiting period during which the legislature has the right to respond to executive orders (in this case they did not), office integration efforts began April 1, 2021. This integration was completed on August 13, 2021.	HB21-1304 was signed into law by Governor Pollis on June 23, 2021. The law established an effective/operational date of July 1, 2022 (1 year ramp up period). A subsequent bill, HB22-1197 advanced the agency's start date to March 1, 2022, to allow for the hiring of key staff in advance of the July 1 "go live" date. An interagency agreement with the CO Department of Human Services covers several administrative processes - including payroll, invoicing - that weren't ready to transition when CDEC launched. This agreement will end on September 30, 2023.
Before and After Structures	The creation of Missouri's Office of Childhood involved the integration and colocation of services previously housed across three state agencies: • MO Department of Social Services (come visiting, child care subsidies, and professional development) • MO Department of Health and Senior Services (home visiting, child care licensing, safe sleep/cribs,	Prior to the transition, many of Colorado's early childhood programs were delivered via an Office of Early Childhood within the Department of Human Services, while others were housed within the Colorado Department of Education. The creation of DEC consolidates programs from both into a separate cabinet agency structure. Additional programs housed within the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (Child and Adult Care Food Program [CACFP] and

	Parent Advisory Council, professional development), and • MO Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (home visiting, quality rating system, early intervention/Part C, prekindergarten and early childhood special education, professional development).	Women, Infants and Children [WIC], were not included in the initial transition, but were suggested for revisiting after the initial start-up phase.
Programs Housed	Home Visiting and Parent Education: • Developmental screenings • School-based Parents as Teachers, federal & state-funded home visiting models • Safe Sleep & Safe Cribs Early Intervention (First Steps, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C): • Child find • Referral • Evaluation and Assessment services, • Home visits and other services for children with significant developmental delays or disabilities and their families. Quality Programs (Early Learning, Preschool, and Afterschool): • Federal (IDEA Part B/619, & Title 1 preschool programs • State-funded preschool • Afterschool programs • Professional Development, • Quality Assurance Report (QAR) Child Care Compliance (via 7 regional offices): • Licensing • Inspections • Investigations Child Care Subsidy	DEC includes five main divisions: Division of Universal Preschool - Provides access to a minimum of 10 hours of voluntary, high-quality preschool to every child in the year before kindergarten. Division of Early Learning, Access, and Quality (DELAQ) - Increases access to affordable, high-quality early learning environments and identifies innovative approaches to achieving school readiness, safe, stable, and nurturing environments, and resilience in early childhood. Division of Early Learning, Licensing and Administration (DELLA) - Licenses and monitors approximately 5,000 child care facilities in Colorado, including child care centers, preschools, family child care homes, neighborhood youth organizations, and children's resident camps, to ensure safe, qualified care. Division of Early Childhood Workforce (DECW) - Professionalizes, honors, and grows early care and education professionals to recruit and retain a diverse, well- compensated, highly competent, and thriving early childhood workforce across all Colorado communities. Division of Community and Family Support (DCFS) - Provides families and communities across Colorado with the resources needed to support young children to be healthy, valued, and thriving in the places that they spend their time, beyond child care and preschool. DCFS is organized into four units: Early Childhood Mental Health, Early Intervention Colorado, Family Strengthening, and State Systems Building Initiatives. Each unit focuses on strengthening the abilities of families and communities so that all children can be healthy, valued, and thriving.

		ECMH includes: • Child First • Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation • Incredible Years • ECMH Support Line Family Strengthening includes: • Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) • Nurse-Family Partnership • Parents as Teachers • SafeCare Colorado • Healthy Steps • Colorado Community Response (CCR) • Family Resource Centers • Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) • Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) • Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund (CO CAP) • Colorado Fatherhood Program • Family Support Through Primary Prevention • Mobile Child Care for Substance Abuse Treatment Pilot The State Systems Building Initiatives Unit maximizes program impact, access, and delivery across Colorado's early childhood system by coordinating operations, funding streams, and resources to promote strategic alignment and meaningful implementation of efforts designed to support families, young children, and professionals. It includes: • Colorado Shines Brighter Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG B-5) • Colorado Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS): Health Integration Prenatal-to-Three Project
Total Budget/FTEs	FY22 - $660 million (excludes one-time COVID relief dollars) 150 FTEs	2022-2023 - $796.7 million 208 FTEs

KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION TASK FORCE

Meeting 1 | March 31, 2023

During Meeting 1, the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force convened to assess the state's existing early childhood landscape. Welcoming remarks were given by Governor Laura Kelly and the Task Force Co-Chairs; Cornelia Stevens (Executive Director at TOP Early Learning Centers) and Sam Huenergardt (President/CEO for AdventHealth's Mid-America Region). The Task Force heard presentations from the state agencies currently housing early childhood programs. These include The Kansas Department of Education (which also houses the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund), the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and the Kansas Department for Children and Families. A group discussion around next steps concluded the session.

CREATION OF THE TASK FORCE

- Governor Laura Kelly issued Executive Order 23-01 on January 10,2023 establishing the Early Childhood Transition Task Force. The task force will come together and create a plan for a single, consolidated early childhood cabinet agency.

KANSAS' EARLY CHILDHOOD LANDSCAPE

> *Presentations from the Kansas Department of Education, Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, the Department for Children and Families, and the Department of Health and Environment*

KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- The Kansas State Department of Education provides the following early childhood services:
  - State Funded Pre-Kindergarten
  - Preschool for Students with Disabilities: authorized annually by the US Department of Education and federally funded through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B, Section 619
  - Kansas Parents as Teachers
  - State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) and Local Interagency Coordinating Councils
  - Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Early childhood at the Kansas State Department of Education is a team of four.

KANSAS CHILDREN'S CABINET AND TRUST FUND

- The Kansas Children's Cabinet funding is funded by the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement
- Kansas Children's Cabinet has been the lead on the PDG B-5 Implementation Grant, while the state's original Preschool Development Grant (focused on prekindergarten expansion) was managed by the Kansas Department of Education.
- Without a single entity overseeing early childhood, there is no single charge or direction on the matter.
- More unified governance would help eliminate the challenges associated with having multiple agencies involved in funding and monitoring programs.

KANSAS DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- The Kansas Department for Children and Families oversees multiple early childhood services including:
  - Child Care Assistance: includes managing the federal Child Care Development fund which is the primary source of direct assistance to low-income families in accessing child care.
  - Child Care Quality
  - Kansas Head Start Collaboration Office
  - Kansas Early Head Start Child Care Partnership and Early Head Start Home Visitation
  - Parent Skill-Building – Family First Prevention Services Act

KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

- Early Childhood Programs within the Bureau of Family Health include:
  - Child Care Licensing

    - Infant-Toddler Services
    - Nutrition & WIC Services
    - Kansas Home Visiting
- 20 programs are under the Bureau of Family Health, including Child Care Licensing.
- About 95% of staffing for child care licensing department are contracted

THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- A common monitoring and evaluation system would be one benefit of a unified system.
- In Kansas, Parents as Teachers is spread (to some degree) across all four early childhood entities, leading to duplicative reporting and measurement.
- Consolidating early childhood programs within one agency would allow for easier distribution of funding and decrease duplication of effort.
- What barriers exist in executing the mission of the Task Force?
- Where is there duplication of effort/administration and where can services be collapsed into one versus four separate entities?
- Which states are leading in this space, making it easy for families to identify and access these services?

Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force

Preliminary Results from Community Engagement Tour

June 27 – 30 and August 2, 2023

University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research

The Hunt Institute

July 2023

Background

Executive Order 23-01, which established the Early Childhood Transition Task Force, tasked the group with holding a series of meetings across the state to generate public feedback and responses to Kansas' current early childhood system and the state's role in it. The Executive Order specifically stated that the Task Force was tasked with "Conducting a series of stakeholder engagement opportunities to elicit feedback on the current early childhood governance structure and better understand the needs of parents, families, providers, and businesses." The Order further directed the Task Force to conduct "a review that synthesizes feedback received from families, providers, community leaders, and the business sector" that should include "recommendations on how the state delivery system and governance model can be improved to respond to family and community need" and "how the state can better engage with parents, families, and communities on a regular basis to ensure family-voice is centered in the work of state agencies." This preliminary results summary attempts to do just that.

To achieve the charge of Executive Order 23-01, the Task Force planned a series of nine different community listening sessions across the state. These sessions were geographically dispersed in all regions of the state, including the northwest, southwest, north central, south central, northeast, and southeast regions of the state. These meetings were held during the day, over the course of the last week of June 2023. The Task Force was graciously hosted in each region by community partners engaged in early childhood system.

Each community listening session, opened with a presentation on the operation of the Task Force and a primer on the conversations occurring across the country on early childhood governance. This introductory period of the meeting included a brief overview of the listening session's structure and what participants could expect from the meeting. Participants were then instructed that the majority of the meeting would be spent in small group discussions on a series of three guiding questions described below. Participants spent generally 30 minutes in small group discussions before the

groups were brought back together for a large group "share out." In each small group, notes were taken to document the conversation. In some cases, Task Force members and staff participated in these conversations as notetakers. In meetings with higher numbers of participants, groups elected a note taker. These small group notes were collected and processed by staff.

During the large group discussion, common threads from the small groups were identified and participants had the opportunity to share their perspectives to all those in attendance. Staff notetakers also took notes for each large group discussion to fully account for all conversations at each meeting. Finally, participants were provided with the opportunity to provide additional feedback to the Task Force through email and in writing. Each participant was given a blank notecard to provide written feedback and a "Hope Meter Card" to rank their feelings toward the system. These cards were collected and processed by staff.

For the virtual engagement session, virtual participants received an identical presentation to open the meeting. The entirety of the meeting was spent in a group discussion. Staff notetakers again recorded the feedback generated from the discussion. Virtual attendees were prompted at the end of the meeting to fill out an online form that served as a proxy for the "Hope Meter Cards" and asked the identical questions of those who attended in person. Individuals who could not participate in the virtual session were also allowed to fill out the online form to submit their own feedback.

In collaboration, the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research (KU-CPPR) and the Hunt Institute processed the data and notes generated during these meetings. The information collected through these meetings will be used for the Task Force's work and to update of the All In for Kansas Kids Needs Assessment, which is funded through the Preschool Development Birth through Five Planning Grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families.

Preliminary Results

To better understand the current situation of early childhood efforts in the State of Kansas, the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force (ECTTF) conducted a statewide tour June 27 – 30, 2023. ECTTF hosted listening sessions in nine locations: Chanute, Wichita, Garden City, Hays, Salina, Manhattan, Topeka, Overland Park, and Kansas City (see map in Figure 2). On August 2, the ECTTF also hosted a virtual opportunity to elicit additional feedback from individuals who could not participate in an in-person meeting. The goal of this tour was to incorporate the voices of community members and their experience with the early child care system and to inform the Task Force recommendations and future policymaking.

It should be noted again that discrepancies exist in determining the exact number of Kansans who attended these listening sessions and what communities they represented. Task Force staff relied on the self-reporting of attendance and personal information like name, city/county, email address, and profession/role. In some cases, attendees did not sign in during the event or did not submit their personal information. The opt-in form of self-reporting created discrepancies between sign-in attendance and headcount attendance which was taken at each meeting. Information shared in this report is based upon voluntary responses collected. In all cases, personally identifiable data and information were not used in this document and will not be made public. The comments individuals provided during discussions were not attributed to their speaker. Table 1 shows the number of participants by location.

Table 1: Number of Participants by Location

Location	Number of Participants
Chanute	36
Wichita	68
Garden City	34
Hays	36
Salina	50
Manhattan	61
Topeka	52
Overland Park	65
Kansas City	52
Virtual (including feedback form)	30
	Total: 484

Note. The number of each location is based on the sign-in sheets collected. Some participants may not have left their information behind. The total number may not reflect all who participated. Headcount attendance totaled 530.

Overall, a well-informed audience turned up at each listening session. Although most of them felt hopeful about the future of our Early Childhood Care and Education system, responses during the sessions and additional comments on the note cards report that the current system and structures are inadequate to meet the needs of Kansas children and families. Attendees were generous with suggestions on what is working and what needs to happen.

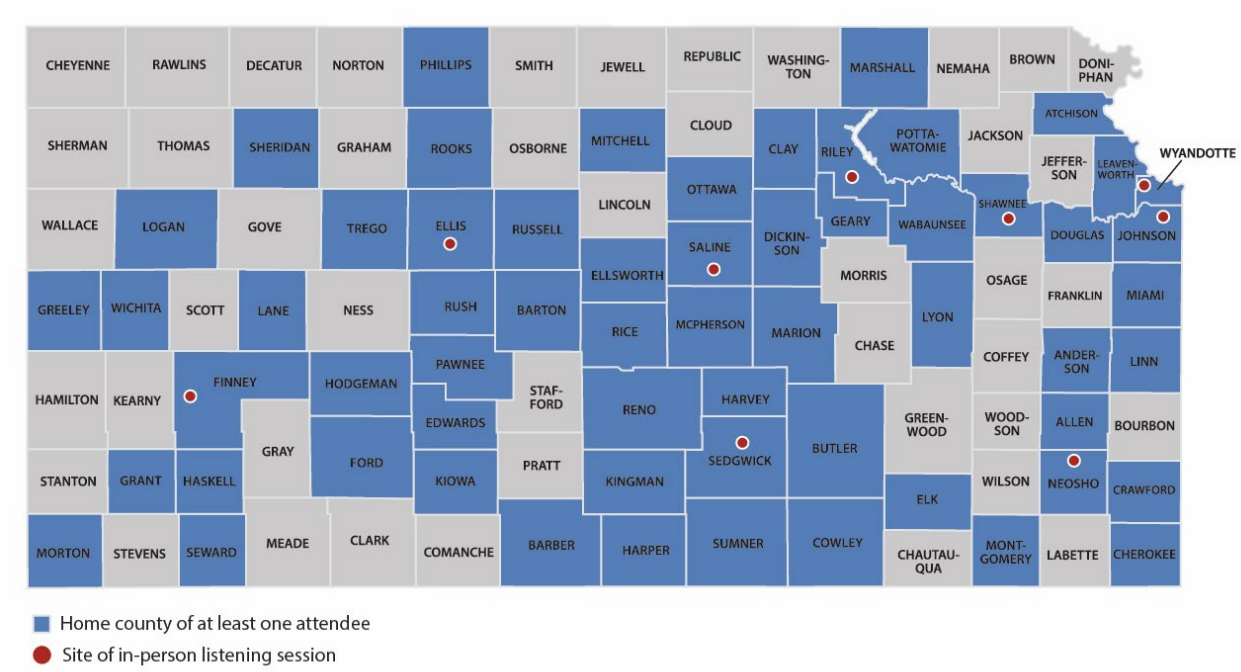
Notes were documented on site. KU-CPPR conducted a thematic analysis on session notes by extracting key themes from the feedback collected in each location and comparing them across all geographic regions.

Attendance Geographic Distribution

As previously mentioned, these listening sessions were well attended and provided an opportunity for around 500 Kansans to provide their feedback and experience navigating the state's early childhood system. During in-person meetings, attendees joined the Task Force in nine different sites across the state. These meetings were held in all geographic meeting types of the state—meaning representation existed from frontier, rural, densely settled rural, semi-urban, and urban communities. The geographic diversity of these meetings was on display, as different communities experienced different types of challenges. In all, there were a series of overarching challenges faced by individuals in every geographic region and type.

Figure 1 show a map of the attendees' home counties. Overall, 60 different counties were represented at one of the listening sessions. When broken down to their specific communities, attendees hailed from nearly 80 different cities or towns in Kansas. Table 2 shows the full list of cities. This data was collected through self-reporting resulting in a more conservative counting of participants' cities and counties.

Figure 1: Home Counties of Attendees Map



List of city/town of residence of meeting attendees:

Abilene
Ellinwood
Iola
McPherson
Sublette
Andover
Elkhart
Jetmore
Merriam
Topeka
Arkansas City
Ellsworth
Junction City
Moran
Tribune
Atchison
Emporia
Kansas City
Mulvane
Ulysses
Baldwin City
Frontenac
Lacrosse
Newton
WaKeeney
Basehor
Garden City
Lawrence
Oakley
Wamego
Beloit
Garnett
Leavenworth
Olathe
Weir
Bennington
Girard
Leawood
Overland Park
Wellington
Belvue
Goddard
Lenexa
Phillipsburg
Whitewater
Benton
Great Bend
Leoti
Pittsburg
Wichita
Chanute
Gypsum
Liberal
Plainville
Clay Center
Hays
Lindsborg
Prairie Village
Coffeyville
Holcomb
Lowe
Randolph
Derby
Howard
Manhattan
Rosehill
Dighton
Hoxie
Marion
Salina
Dodge City
Humboldt
Marysville
Satanta
El Dorado
Hutchinson
McFarland
Shawnee

Listening Session Results

The participants' responses were prompted by questions in three different categories: Needs and Barriers, Bright Spots, and State's Efficiency in Early Child Care and Education.

Question 1: What challenges, gaps, or barriers have you and your community faced while navigating the early childhood system? What are the greatest needs you and your community are facing?

Question 2: What services and programs are currently working on the local level and serve as bright spots for progress in supporting young children and families? What innovation is occurring in your community that could become models for practice in other regions and statewide?

Question 3: How would you evaluate the state's efficiency in providing support to you and your community in the early childhood sector? How has the State of Kansas—and the programs it operates—contributed to your successes and challenges?

- For example, how has the state's operation of child care licensing, home visiting, child care subsidy, or other programs impacted your experience navigating the system?

Analysts divided the key themes extracted from responses collected in each location by areas to "Improve" and "Celebrate". Themes were consistent across the state with consensus around challenges such as inefficiencies, low wages, and workforce recruitment.

To Improve

- Licensing. The current process is slow, cumbersome, and hindered by the Fire Marshal's outdated security code and response rate. New providers often do not know where they are in the process and what they need to do to get approved. In rural areas, in-home providers feel less inclined to go through the application process due to the time and effort it requires.
- Lack of Workforce. Some care facilities that shut down during the Covid-19 pandemic never reopened. Low wages make recruitment and staff retention difficult. Many providers think that there are too few child care training programs available in their areas. The antiquated public perception of early child care professions due to some government officials' indifferent attitude toward the field further lowers potential providers' interest in joining. Many child care providers feel they do not garner the same respect as educators. The inadequate workforce is in a perpetual deficit cycle where one person calling in sick causes a domino effect that sometimes results in having to shut down a classroom.
- Affordability — Child care comes with a high cost of both receiving and providing care. To many respondents, the cost of care still feels high even with the state's subsidy. Some described the situation as a donut hole for middle-income families in that they made too much to receive child care subsidies, yet the portion of their pay devoted to child care is burdensome. Meanwhile, the providers describe child care as a low margin business, where it is difficult to keep their lights on and doors open.
- Accessibility. Many families reported that they do not have reliable transportation to seek out care due to the lack of a vehicle or the long travel distance and time. Geographic boundaries are not always aligned which makes smooth transitions between services difficult (transportation between school system and child care). Similar feedback was received from early childhood professionals. The long travel time reduces the home visitors' capacity to work with more families. There are also language challenges and immigration issues that

prevent families from getting services they need.

- System Navigation. Participants from all nine locations made the point that it is difficult to navigate the various programs and find relevant information. Families reported that different programs do not communicate with one another to offer a cohesive system. State employees often do not have the correct information to guide them through the complicated system.
- Inefficiencies. There was recognition that there has been increased collaboration over the past couple of years between agencies, however the system is stressed, and staff are doing the best they can. Turnover at the state level has resulted in loss of historical knowledge and smooth communication between state agencies. Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) surveyors were recognized as being available and helpful, however the dual requirements and processes for licensing and subsidy required by the KDHE and Kansas Department of Children and Families (DCF) make it difficult for new providers to navigate. There is a tension between state policies and local needs: Local communities must piece together fragmented funding to create a cohesive system. Grant applications and reporting requirements are burdensome.
- Programmatic Funding. Restricted funding makes it difficult for communities to provide the services families need. Special education is not fully funded. There is a growing need for mental health services, which are largely unmet and underfunded.
- Social Stigma and/or Assistance Fatigue. Some families chose not to seek help because of perceived social stigma around receiving government subsidies and fear of professionals coming into their home (and removing their children). Others mentioned the difficulty of accessing services. Providers reported sometimes not being given reasons for subsidy denial. This negative public perception is a hurdle to state efforts to build a cohesive Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) system.

To Celebrate

- Local School Districts. Many communities noted extensive collaboration between local school districts and community-based agencies that they hadn't experienced in the past. Additionally, many schools opened space to provide child care.
- Business Support and Public-Private Partnerships. Local businesses collaborate with Chambers of Commerce and provide financial for private investments in the early child care ecosystem. Many noted the joint partnerships of local governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private-sector investors that rallied to generate local solutions to the lack of adequate child care in their community. The Child Care Accelerator Grants were recognized as a rare opportunity for facility construction and expansion of service capacity.
- Nonprofit Organizations. Entities such as Child Care Aware and United Way have been a positive force in providing guidance on navigation and resources.
- Unconventional Spaces. Local community centers and churches open spaces and provide community support in early child care.
- Collaboration of State Agencies. Attendees noted the increased communication and collaboration of state agencies. Most found this encouraging and wanted to see more of it.
- Professional Passion and Pride. Early Childhood Care and Education professionals believe in the work they are doing and want to be able to afford to continue working in this profession.

Community Engagement Hope Meter Cards

Table 3 shows the role of the 416 listening session participants who filled out Hope Meter cards (see Appendix Figure 3). Over 40% of the attendees were service providers. About a fifth were community members and parents. The remainder were policy makers, state leadership in Early Childhood, or identified with other roles.

Table 2: *Distribution of Roles of Attendees*

Role	N	%
Community Member	88	21.1%
Other	19	4.6%
Parent	94	22.5%
Policy Maker	16	3.8%
Service Provider	183	43.9%
State leadership in EC	17	4.1%

Note. For the purposes of this data analysis, the primary role identification of participants was used.

The Hope Meter Card asked participants two questions: a) Their experience with state programs, b) how hopeful they are that Kansas is going in the right direction in early childhood.

Table 3 shows that the average hope score was high, with an average of 7.42, meaning the state is going in the right direction. This high score conveys trust and confidence from those in attendance. Over 75% of attendees indicated a Hope Meter score of 7 or above (see Table 4) with almost 14% expressing high hope and confidence in state leadership.

Table 3: Overall descriptive statistics of Hope Card scores

Rating	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Deviation
Hope Rating (1-10, with 1 less hopeful and 10 more hopeful)	416	0	10	7.42	1.94

Table 4: *Frequency of Hope Card scores*

Hope Rating (1-10, with 1 less hopeful and 10 more hopeful)	N	%
0	1	0.2
1	7	1.7
2	5	1.2
3	7	1.7
4	10	2.4
5	24	5.8
6	48	11.5
7	84	20.1
8	115	27.6
9	58	13.9
10	57	13.7
System Missing	1	0.2

We further analyzed the scores to find any significant difference in Hope Card scores between groups. As shown in Table 4 and 5, there were no significant differences in Hope scores between groups, with averages ranging from 7 – 8 in all groups, including parents and community members.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of Hope Card scores by attendee role(Hope rating (1 less hopeful to 10 more hopeful)

Role (choose one or more)	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Community Member	7.33	88	2.027
Other	6.83	18	2.256
Parent	7.37	94	1.912
Policy Maker	8.13	16	1.586
Service provider	7.41	183	1.933
State leadership in EC	8.18	17	1.425
Total	7.42	416	1.938

Table 6: ANOVA of Hope Card rating (NS)

Sum of Squares		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Between Groups	(Combined)	24.827	5	4.965	1.327	.252
Within Groups		1534.394	410	3.742		
Total		1559.221	415			

*Note. Hope rating (1 less hopeful to 10 more hopeful) * Role (choose one or more)*

On average, experience with state programs was rated a 7/10, with no statistically significant differences between groups (see Table 7, 8 and 9). In other words, attendees were very familiar with the ECCE system.

Table 7: *Overall descriptive statistics of Experience with State Programs*

Overall descriptive statistics of Experience with State Programs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Experience with state programs (1 Neg to 10 Pos)	416	6.656	1.994	3.978
Valid N (listwise)	416			

Note. Std. Deviation and Variance use N rather than N-1 in denominators.

Table 8: *Descriptive statistics of Experience with State Programs by attendee role (*Experience with state programs (1 Neg to 10 Pos))

Role (choose one or more)	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Community Member	6.188	88	2.2184
Other	6.421	19	1.4266
Parent	6.823	93	2.0439
Policy Maker	6.188	16	3.0380
Service provider	6.784	183	1.7631
State leadership in EC	7.500	17	1.9365
Total	6.656	416	1.9969

Table 9: ANOVA of Experience with State Programs (NS)

Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.		
Between Groups	(Combined)	41.572	5	8.314	2.113	.063
Within Groups	1613.272	410	3.935			
Total	1654.844	415				

Note. Experience with state programs (1 Neg to 10 Pos). Role (choose one or more).

We also analyzed if participants' experience with state programs has any relation to their hopefulness and found that there is a strong statistically significant correlation ($r = .443$; $p < .001$) between experience with state programs and Hope scores (see Table 10). The more familiar the participant was with state programs was, the higher their Hope score was. This finding suggests that attendees are familiar with the system and have confidence in current systemic approaches.

Table 10: Correlation between Experience with state programs with Hope Card Rating

	Experience with state programs	Hope rating	
Experience with state programs	Pearson Correlation	1	.443**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	416	415
Hope rating	Pearson Correlation	.443**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	415	416

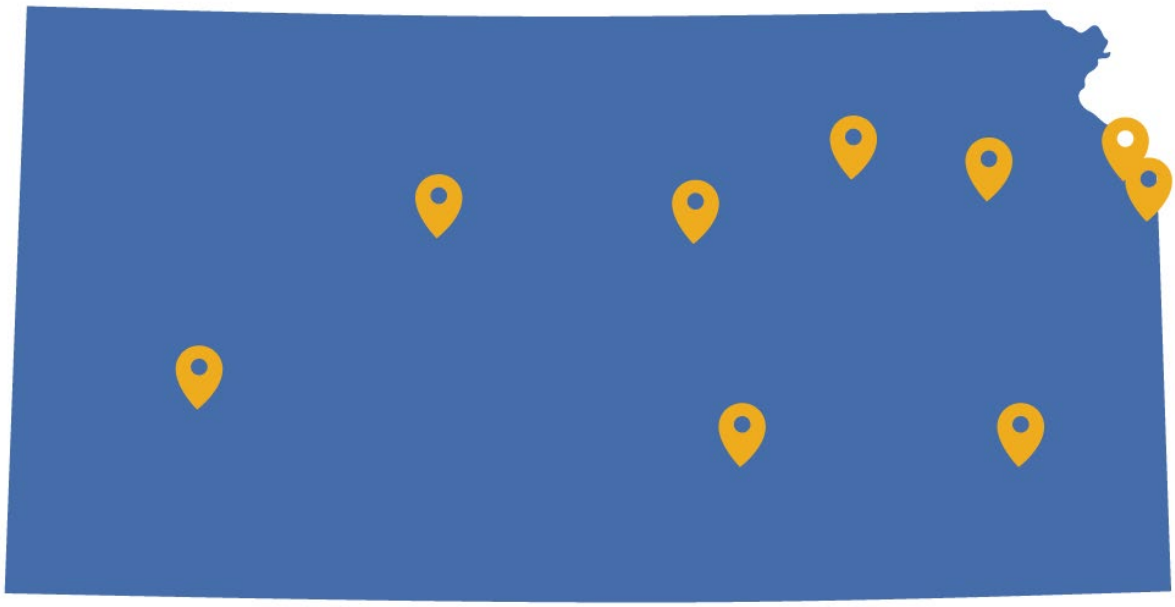
Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Experience with state programs (1 Neg to 10 Pos). Hope rating (1 less hopeful to 10 more hopeful).

Recommendations

- Support public-private partnerships to increase the availability and accessibility of child care providers and establish child care as essential community infrastructure.
- Establish an agency under which select programs would be housed, making it easier for families and providers to navigate services.
- Streamline the licensing process to address barriers and design an efficient process for providers.
- Provide technical assistance and education on business ownership, funding streams, grant writing, and capacity building to address difficulties providers face with accessing funding streams such as operational grants.

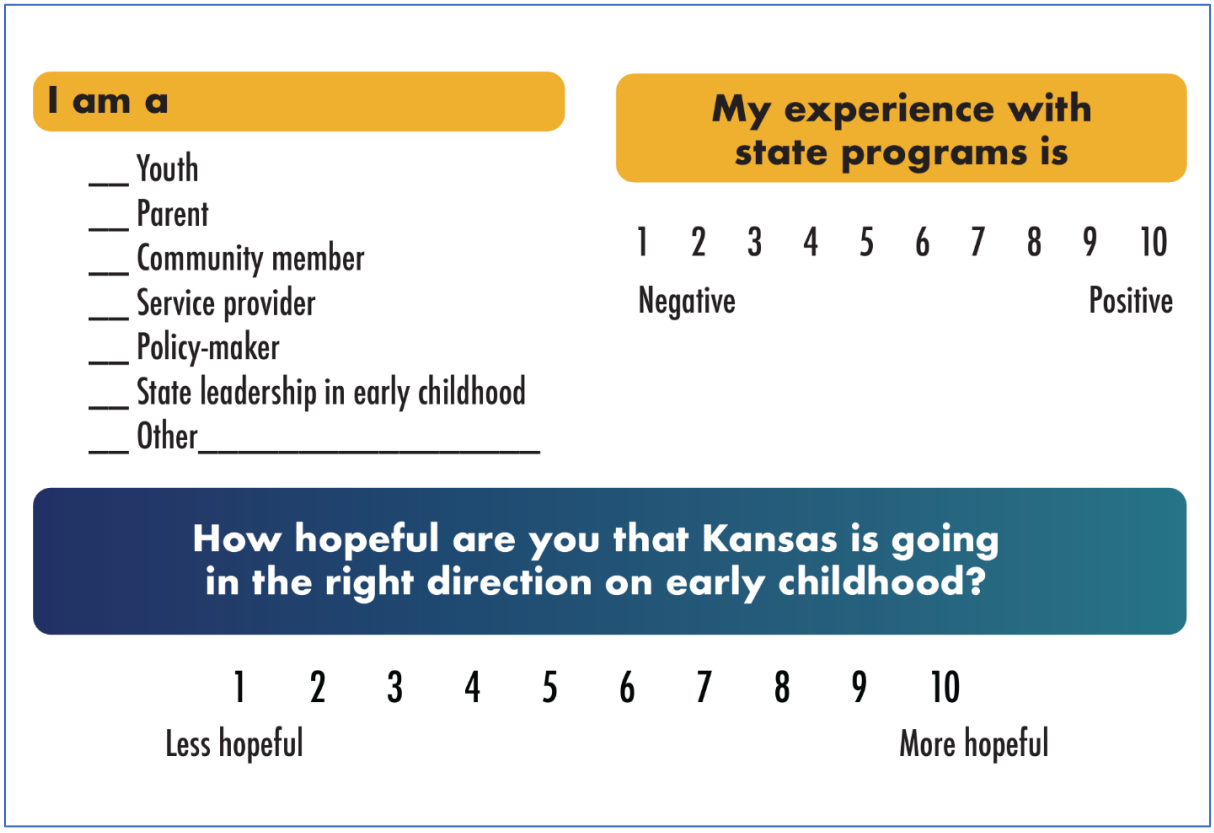
Appendices

Figure 2: Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force 2023 Tour Map showing locations of listening session locations.



Locations: Chanute, Wichita, Garden City, Hays, Salina, Manhattan, Topeka, Overland Park, and Kansas City

Figure 3: Community Engagement Hope Meter Card Sample



Note Cards

Quotes from Participants

1. Deregulation is never the answer to any problems/challenges facing the EC field with the lack of early childhood programs. I hope/pray that is not going to be brought up again and again. It will not answer the program supply issue.
2. At some point we need the state to make a determination regarding the role schools should play in 0-3. 1. Be the overseeing entity? If this is the direction, let's do a year. phase-in with the expectation for schools to oversee and then fund it through the schools. 2. Support System? Districts don't provide direct care but act as a supporting entity. If we can clearly communicate this to schools, districts will step up to the challenge and expectation, but funding must match the expectation.
3. KDHE is hard to work with. DCF is very simple to work with. Licensing surveyors need more guidance for what each regulation's parameters are! Not open to each licensing surveyor's interpretation! This is a LARGE reason for lack of providers in Saline, McPherson, & Ottawa counties!
4. Ongoing support for current EC community providers. Locating staff professional [development?]. Continuum of services- home to school, preschool, want home. Support preschools already in place. Insurance cost is prohibitive. Lack of qualified personnel [who] understand or have knowledge of running programs, state level funding- pay decrease. Good use of ASQ. Not enough professionals for mental health training. Not enough local funding for mental health.
5. Consider study of cost efficiency of beginning public education at age 0, comparing lifelong support needed for those who didn't get a good start in early childhood.

6. Support and encouragement to get and retain family childcare is a minimum. We are able to license homes faster which allows more access but without funding we are forced to out price our middle-class families. DCF and Raising Riley are great assistance programs but they both serve the lowest income people. We continue to miss the middle. More buildings don't help mentoring. Current providers make retention last and bring more providers.
7. Don't forget healthcare as part of the EC system. Parents and children need quality healthcare to be able to thrive and learn. Medicaid plays a role in the EC system. They cover nearly 40% of births and have a large impact on families during the critical first 1,000 days. Healthcare providers, community health workers, etc. play a role.
8. How can Extension assist with any efforts? Agents are in all 105 KS counties.
9. More financial aid for individuals eager to achieve licensure.
10. 1. Early Childhood is NOT just child care and it's not just education. 2. Getting everyone in the same room does not guarantee efficiency or collaboration. It's deeper than that.
11. If child care professionals were predominately male, would they pay/support be greater? Parents as Teachers model is a bright spot and should be duplicated. Funding taken from child care to support rec centers in one community. *Army Child Care in Your Neighborhood* was a successful model in KS, not accessible to all though.
12. Guidance on subsidies as an employee benefit was not clear and it is not working for everyone who would qualify. Food intentions go awry when legislation is not drafted with informed stakeholders-decisions. Care is not valued. Trauma effects of COVID on children, families, and staff need addressed. NAEYC Power to the Profession, follow NAEYC ration recommendations.

13. Enhance support, coaching, mentorship with existing partners instead of starting from scratch (e.g., turn to KCCTO and Child Care Aware). Must be a non-profit model to allow charitable giving. Not a "livable wage" go for a "sustainable/thriving wage". Administration tasks could be centralized to allow directors to focus on quality care and family relations.
14. Need more action - fund the issue and support the workforce. Confirmation of fragmentation - individuals at the table reported not knowing what others were doing and already having some solutions in place (that could be models). Indiana coaching and apprenticeship model - micro credentialing, getting credit from community college for training accomplishments accepted by university as a transfer credit.
15. Need a path to support professional development and growth to reduce burnout from direct care. Barrier - leaders are not on the same page, a statewide approach will help. Costs of care should be subsidized with government funds (look at military child care model). Pay needs increased at all levels to draw and retain the right people with subsidies.
16. Care is not separate from education. If it's a state department of early childhood education, focus could become too attached to activities/expectations that are not developmentally appropriate. CAUTION: Be careful about "schoolification" of early care programs. Look to: Illuminating Care by Carol Garboden Murray.
17. Increase accessibility to and awareness of Child Find.
18. We need more inclusion preschool classrooms with adequate transportation. If child care and the child's preschool are in different school districts, the child is not transported to preschool.
19. Help remove barriers so EC programs can provide wrap around services for families and children who need and could benefit from more than one service - for instance - child care should be regularly included in Part B and C services.

20. If the issue is funding so we can adequately compensate child care employees, we need to develop a mechanism to fund the system. Sources of funding could include federal, state, employers, foundations, philanthropy, health foundations, school districts. We need to develop a "system" for 0–5-year-olds like the public education system funded through public private partnerships.
21. When this new agency is developed, we have questions/concerns: What happens to the Children's Cabinet? Will the key fund and tobacco money still be identified, or will they be folded into the state budget? Will we lose ECBG and other opportunities?
22. KDHE and KSDE -> one agency for childcare and EC education. State funding for EC is just like K-12. If we must keep writing grants for state 4yo pre-K, include ALL children who qualify for reduced meals, not just free. This is a huge issue in our community.
23. Streamline the info to help a person go from unlicensed to licensed OR call one entity to report and address unlicensed care. Increase the public knowledge of the importance of early childhood educators.
24. I think expanding Medicaid to moms for 12 months after delivery is very important for maternal mental health, so this is a huge positive. Adequate (inadequate) reimbursement for Medicaid and DCF child care are huge negatives.
25. I think we have wonderful services and programs in this area. However they're losing funding, not enough space. Not enough ability to gain 0-3 services - Employment benefits - early education - homelessness - poverty - mental health services and even substance use programs. Local relationships/community partnering, we need people to get the services and the services need to be known.
26. All day pre-K is NOT lunch and a nap for half the day!

27. Our concern is that the government is not the best way to achieve success. We are disappointed Gov. Kelly vetoed the child care bill this session. We would like to encourage the free market and private businesses to be allowed to solve this issue, not government.
28. I am so appreciative for Governor Kelly's support of early childhood education.
29. 1. Retaining staff, receiving funding, livable wages for employees, helping families afford child care. 2. We are currently expanding our center. We will grow from 60 to 120 by the start of the school year. 3. Slow, still waiting on my sustainability grant.
30. Three main funding streams for ECE workforce- Increase DCF subsidy Quality v Market cost, KSDE preschool funding (formula) add 0-5, Links to Quality workforce compensation/benefits tied with participation in it and career pathway. Welcome to the world package for new babies. Consolidate home visiting, expand ABC home visiting! Libraries should be supported in literacy and early childhood systems, providing informal care now, expand family engagement in libraries, use as front-facing services of office of early childhood.
31. Compensation for child care - problem. Transportation - barrier. Insurance issues - lack of/ Medicaid billing issues that limit services. Need support for better staff training for social emotional issues kids dealing with.
32. Neosho County - lack of infant slots, lack of funding - waiting for CCA grant, KSU needs assessment doesn't provide list of providers. Appreciate Gov. Kelly's interest in child care in rural KS. Too many silos - esp. families of children with special health care needs. Rural isolation - difficult to access services so USD becomes the hub.
33. Kansas focus on funding for new child care is a bright spot. Stigma for Home visiting. Length of time/difficulty of getting licensed caused loss of eligibility for sustainability grants. Anderson County partnerships help sustain child care. DCF funding varies per county - cost per center stays the same.

34. Delays getting DCF subsidy for families. Wyandotte county aids in finding funds to help families. Child care wages are the biggest barrier (no benefits). Humboldt businesses helping child care, sugar creek paying for building and utilities. Fragmented system - create regional hubs to support child care.
35. Funding for centers to help sustain care: payroll, tuition, program costs, training & education costs, fill empty spots. Streamline licensing processes. DCF amounts increased & the process needs to be easier. Partnerships, strengthen.
36. Overlap of provided support for childcare professionals. Services available but unknown.
37. Sick child care for families working if they are risking losing job. Poverty simulation done by Head Start is amazing for employers to understand needs. Court mandated home visiting for families in the system.
38. "Workforce Behind the Workforce" Delays in starting child care facility: OSFM, staffing, CCL = Compounded delays. Discrepancy of funding with different parts of the state (DCF subsidy). Triage of supports + strength of local partnerships.
39. Home visiting programs: make them accessible, working with other programs, billing insurance for services
40. Education for parents about early childhood while they are pregnant. So many parents do not understand that birth-5 are the most important years.
41. State looks at a deliverable for maternal and health grants to help families figure out quality childcare.
42. Getting the list as a parent for child care providers is difficult. They only get a few at a time. It should be the parents' choice- they should receive the list of all providers. When getting a child care license, we need fire marshal licensing to work together and talk. As a new provider you have to talk to different organizations. They should each call the other.
43. What should we do to incentivize businesses to provide in-house child care? Can we help

make it cost effective for a business to hire a child care professional at a livable wage so they can also get more qualified employees to do the work of the business? Also, can we mandate 12 weeks paid leave for new families? That is the ultimate early childhood investment.

44. It is difficult to find ways to participate, serve, grow, and share knowledge with early childhood groups with the state and communities. I would like to be part of the groups but struggle to find the groups and get my foot in the door.
45. Rural families and schools have different challenges than more populated areas. While we do want to create a common system, I also hope we remember rural families and school needs cannot be lost in the voices of larger districts.
46. An innovation our state should consider is the 2-generation whole family approach to poverty as a framework to align services for families as part of a human-centered design approach. Early education affects the whole family and while the child is the true focus, the success of the child is inextricably linked to the health and success of every individual in the household.
47. Need for insurance subsidy. More money in system.
48. Allowing early childhood development students to take early learning Praxis. ASQ streamline for districts.
49. Kids World Childcare Learning Center offers full day Pre-K program. It has been a true help to the families/parents we serve.
50. Sustained, protected revenue source for early childhood education in KS and federal. (Consider payroll tax, death to birth) Organized child care/home provider units with Links to Quality. Wage compensation scale/benefits for providers: create incentives for professional development, base rate pay increases for providers delivering needed care (infant, overnight), K-12 pay parity goals. Funding a statewide substitute program. Links to Quality access ro KPERs.
51. Infant Toddler Service making contacts with parents

52. Child care = public good = infrastructure. 1. Barriers- Child care workforce, understaffed, underpaid, under supported > leads to lack of slots for quality child care. Cost of child care, can cost more than housing. Need full day/full year coverage. Parents don't only work part days and partial years. 2. Strategies working = Start Young scholarships and gap funding for families, wage supplement for staff. BUT - wage supplement is 2x per year increased wages need to be on every paycheck for providers to be impacted every day and to be treated as professionals. Providing scholarships and support for staff to increase wages. Coaching for both early childhood mental health and classroom instruction. Slots need to be quality not just a slot. 3. Child care subsidy is limited - families need quicker access and fewer barriers to subsidy- should not be denied when not working - can't pay for care if lose or denied when not getting child support. Stop punishing parents! Help them!
53. Parents and providers hold the key to help answer some of the hard questions. We need to keep working to have clear communication. We need to strengthen the workforce.
54. As a parent, I believe the state struggles with students that have IEPs. With not knowing all the IEP lingo and then deadlines for state agencies to meet, my child may have missed some IEP deadlines had I not known that there were some. I pushed agencies to get somethings done while being flexible with my time. How to make things easier with transition with ages/transitions.
55. Sensitivity training for staff who work in agencies serving the families/children we work with. Oftentimes parents don't feel heard or respected.

56. I would encourage the Taskforce to look at child care as a whole - to include in-home providers. Child care centers get the most attention but without in-home providers in the conversation, the state is not supporting a large need. They can be on an island alone without direction or help and the current KDHE website is hard to navigate.
57. System doesn't allow for transportation. Districts often only transport within geographical area. No coordination between centers & schools. Funding often dictates options. Continuity with funding - system doesn't support continuity of care. Based on where you live. School districts represent an opportunity. PAT, DPIL. Fully fund Idea Part C services but do not allow local districts to use these funds to increase general funds. There needs to be a net increase, I think. We need a system of 5 child care tax credits linked to a quality rating system. 1 Parent tuition credit 2. Child care workforce tax credits 3. child care donor tax credit 4. Program credit 5. Corporate tax credit.
58. In rural communities where I'm located, the licensing process is intimidating. I have prospective in-home providers scared off because the process seems too daunting. We need positive people who can walk new providers through the licensing process.
59. How are families being engaged in this process? google for QR code. Update technology to help family access. Resources need evening hours so families can access. See table notes
60. Why are we trying to make child care fit businesses and 12-hour shift work? Perhaps businesses (Panasonic) should offer flexible shifts to better mees the needs of their employees (and be more developmentally appropriate for children). Can child care providers get state benefits (insurance & retirement)?

61. Connect within office of early childhood: schools (public, universities), part c, early childhood organizations > state funded. PAT, Mental Health, Quality initiatives and accreditations, business partners, workforce input & feedback. Create some connections for a seamless system that avoids duplication of services and is well funded.
62. Bright spots- Kansas state school for the blind. Free statewide vision services for infants and toddlers for part C providers & families - starting in august 2023 in collaboration with KDHE. Statewide free resources for early childhood B-5 with deaf/blindness or combined hearing & vision loss.
63. Bright spots - Legislature & children's cabinet support of DPIL has been a huge benefit to families and communities.
64. Child licensing has an extended wait time for most requests (i.e. new license, amended license, etc.) Fire marshal & KDHE do not work together. Getting a new license has been a major challenge.
65. Needs: Stagnant funding for PAT - grants need more money and increased each year for cost of inflation. inequity between locations across state in child care/preschool opportunities. Infant toddler child care slots. lack of staffing due to low wages. Strength areas - supportive governor invited in early childhood issues and strengthening state systems.
66. How does Kansas daycare licensing requirements compare to other states. Are the requirements a burden here? What would it have to look like to get daycare facilities placed in apartment complexes? Stand-alone building but within the complex.
67. Benefits for child care workers at the state level (health care provided by state). CDA program for high school pathways for education

68. Gender equality issue > women impacted greatly > paid less when returning to work, putting less money into social security & 401k, out of workforce impacts economy and careers of women. Need universal pre-K, full-time pre-K for all students, kids all deserve to be ready for kindergarten. Need a statewide commitment to pay for this and hopefully subsidize child care, the cost is such a barrier. Paid leave for parental leave needed. Incentivize child care centers in business & apartment complexes or require it to get TIF money. Tax benefits to centers & employees, access to better healthcare plans.
69. We need funding! Sustainability grants to keep our doors open! We cannot wait even 30-60 days for funding sources.
70. Tax credit for teachers both preschool/grade school. Medicare access for child care professionals. State funding to offset tuition cost. New curriculum for social emotional. Play therapy. More resources, needing full-time / one-on-one support.
71. See ads for getting people to join in for childcare in Kansas but need support through insurance and funding for wages to get and maintain quality employment. Money talks. Positive- Monthly provider calls with Eldonna (?) great to keep us updated and training.
72. Need a Zoom listening session at a time when child care providers can participate. Need paid parental leave like other countries. Need financial supports like other countries.
73. Small school districts have NO businesses to draw upon for resources, need the support financially, implementation, direction (how to bring childcare to the district). We are ready and willing to do this in our district we simply need guidance & personnel to help make the implementation occur.

MEETING THREE AND AD HOC WORK GROUP STRUCTURE

Following the completion of the statewide stakeholder engagement tour, the Task Force will shift towards crafting a final report that provides the required "framework for a model single-agency governance structure for early childhood programming that consolidates initiatives and funding under the leadership of a new cabinet-level agency."

The engagement tour highlighted a series of methods for supporting early childhood stakeholders and the needs experienced by those engaged in this work. More than anything else, we heard from nearly every community (rural to urban) and across sectors (from childcare providers to businesses to parents) that there was a significant need for a state-level "one-stop shop" or central coordinating "hub" to support the efforts of stakeholders. This feedback supports Governor Kelly's charge to the group and elevates the importance of state-level governance reform.

Stakeholder Engagement Tour | June 27-30, 2023

Regional early childhood leaders participating in guided discussion at Meeting Two of the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force's Stakeholder Engagement Tour in Wichita.

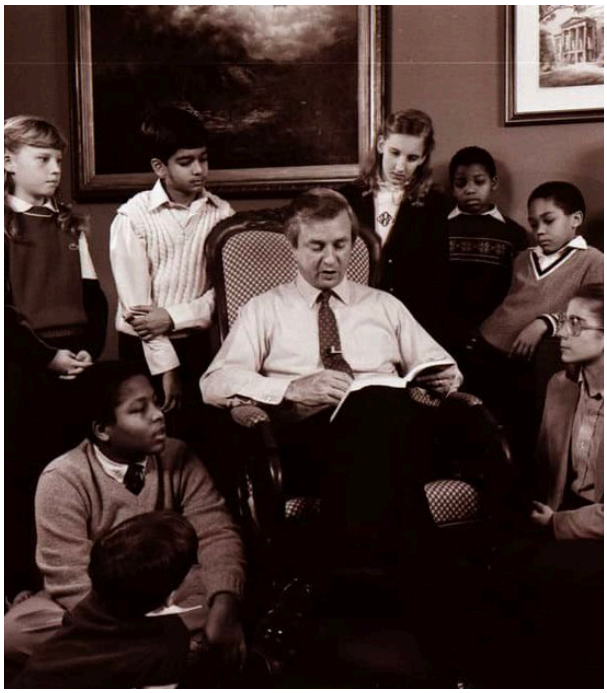
During Meeting #3, the Task Force will receive a report on the data and feedback collected across ten stakeholder engagement sessions. The group will then transition to a discussion of four guiding questions intended to shape the conversation around recommendations and a blueprint for a new agency. These conversations will help staff begin crafting a final report that encompasses the Task Force's work and suggestions for what should be housed in a new agency, how that agency should judge success and efficiency, and how the state can operationalize the transition once the agency is created.

To that end, we propose to create three Ad Hoc Work Groups to refine Task Force conversations, suggestions, and feedback into tangible recommendations that can be presented to the full Task Force and included in the final report. The three ad hoc work groups will focus on programmatic movement, metrics, and transition logistic recommendations.

Task Force members will be asked to self-select into one of these three work groups. Staff will work to create a slate of members for each work group based on member preferences. These groups will virtually meet 1-2 times throughout September and Early October to craft draft recommendations for full Task Force review and discussion. Each group will be asked to identify a "Leader" to lead discussions and assist in channeling the group's work into recommendations. The "Leader" will be tasked with presenting their group's work during meeting #4. Staff will continue to support these working group meetings.

The work of these groups will be used to help build the structure and draft recommendations for the final report. As currently envisioned, the final report will consist of four categories of recommendations, tentatively titled:

- Programmatic Movements—What programs does this new agency administer?
- Metrics and Data—How will the agency track efficiency and effectiveness?
- Transition Logistics—How should the transition occur?
- Other Game Changing Actions—What other actions are needed to move this system forward, but outside the scope of this Task Force's charge to study? What other needs were identified by the stakeholder engagement sessions?



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