

A publication of Child Care Aware® of Kansas

# KansasChild

Spring 2020 Volume 18, Issue 6

**Parent  
Helpline**

*Healthy  
Development*

**IN THIS ISSUE**

**Infant Toddler**

**ACTIONS  
SPEAK  
LOUDER  
THAN  
WORDS**



# Magic Moments

**T**he Kansas Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, doing business as Child Care Aware® of Kansas is celebrating our 30th anniversary in June 2020! And for all those 30 years, I've had the privilege of sitting at this desk and helping to guide this important work. The time has flown by!

That work has included publishing seventy-one (71!) issues of *Kansas Child*. It started in the winter of 2002 when our staff was searching for a way to provide a forum for thoughtful discussions about child care and early education issues. How could we bring these "conversations" to both those in the field and those outside the field so that all would gain a better understanding of the priorities and concerns of young parents, their children and the special people who educate and care for them?

*Kansas Child* was born, and I couldn't be happier with the result. Over those 71 issues, we have presented information on everything from kindergarten readiness, maternal and child health, and a focus on fatherhood, to financing the early education system, brain development in the early years and so many more topics.

Every issue has included an array of authors, including early childhood teachers, family child care providers, national experts, and community and state leaders. And, in every issue, Child and Family Specialist Alice Eberhart-Wright has provided wonderful suggestions for books to read to young children through the Book Nook feature.

To put it mildly, I'm proud of all 71 issues — the ideas discussed, the views presented and the wonderful pictures of real-life Kansas kids on the cover. Those kiddos make my heart sing!

On June 30th, I will retire and leave this desk that I've had the privilege and pleasure to occupy for the past 30 years.

I've learned a lot, like how to play nice in the sandbox, so to speak, while working for the common good. I've weathered policy decision and changes that were not in my control. I've worked with some wonderful and gracious political figures and I've been yelled at by a politician who did not agree with me.

As an organization, Child Care Aware has been privileged to be part of new ideas and methods in the early childhood field. And, since 1990, we've helped almost 400,000 families find child care through the child care resource center. A significant feat for sure!

So, dear readers, thank you for letting me into your home or your early childhood setting to have these important "conversations" through the pages of *Kansas Child*. When your summer issue arrives, it will have someone new for you to get to know and converse with.

Throughout my career I have seen some wonderful advances in the early childhood field in Kansas. However, there is still much to be done to ensure that EVERY CHILD has the opportunity to access affordable, high-quality child care. I trust that you will carry on the good work and continue to always ask the most important question: "Is it good for children?"



**LEADELL EDIGER**

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# *Firm Foundation for LIFE*

BY L. CAROL SCOTT, PhD

Every other period in the human life cycle pales in importance when compared to the first three years. That statement might shock you. You might be questioning me: “But what about when we learn to think logically? Or to read? What about those crucial years of transitioning from teenager to adult? What about the wisdom of the golden years?”

Even considering these alternatives, I stand by my dramatic opening. Nothing matters so much to the success of our species and its many cultures as what we do for infants and toddlers. Here’s why: none of the rest of that—thinking logically, reading, adulting, wisdom—is possible without a firm foundation in the first three years. In fact, that explains a few people you know, I’m guessing.

You see, we humans are not fully cooked when the bun comes out of the oven. Our species’ babies are born, not because they’re fully ready for life on the outside, but because they have run out of room for floating in their little maternal hot tub.

After a fairly protected beginning for its first nine months of growth, that little human newborn, now out here in the big, noisy, busy world, still has an enormous amount of developing to do.

Unlike the young of most animals on our planet, human newborns do not immediately stagger to a stand, tuck into a first meal, or join the running herd. (That would make parenting SO much easier, eh? Or maybe not...) Delivered into its first experience of air and daylight after hours of labor, the neonate of our species is utterly helpless. Even marsu-







pials have enough independent mobility at birth to crawl to the pouch and latch on. But human infants, at birth, are neither physically mobile nor, frankly, mentally fit for life.

We help make them so, or we don't. Adult responsibility for very young children is just that straightforward...and that overwhelmingly terrifying.

We—the adults who directly care for them, along with our corporate and government partners who make the policies that affect their new lives—make them fit for life, or we inadvertently create challenges. Neuroscience, modern brain scanning technologies, and a plethora of other research data have revealed the definitive answer to the old Nature vs. Nurture controversy. Yes, if you haven't read the books or seen the movies —spoiler alert—it's Nurture, hands down. We—their families, communities, and governments—help make a child into a good neighbor, or we start him/her down the road to being an unpleasant neighbor. And we get a significant start on one of those outcomes in the first three years of that child's life.

We adults ensure that these most vulnerable members of our species grow up connected to us and each other in healthy relationships. We ensure their access to the world as their natural learning playground. Every single child brings the only learning tool they'll need for a long time: an innate and self-perpetuating curiosity.

Nature does its part, definitely. Our gigantic human brain holds awe-inspiring raw material: 100 billion neurons ready and waiting for a connection to meaning. We start with about as many brain cells as stars in the Milky Way; almost all the neurons we will ever have. Yet, they're about as helpful as the box full of spare connector cables each of us adults has in storage somewhere. Unconnected, they just sit

there in a useless tangle, taking up space.

But not for long! Brain science has demonstrated that every newborn's 100 billion neurons are wired together into patterns of learning, meaning, and understanding in response to experience, starting immediately at birth. You look into an infant's eyes, stroke its cheek, or echo its laughter, and — zip-zappety-zap! — those neurons in a useless tangle suddenly connect. They “wire together” to form networks in response to external events.

So, this might be news for you: you're among the wiring contractors and electricians deciding how things get hooked up. And 85 percent of the work is finished in each child's new little home of personality by the time they reach age 3. That's right: we're about 5 percent wired at birth and 85 percent wired by 3.

This brain development isn't directly about how well a child is going to do in reading, writing, and arithmetic. This early wiring is mostly about a child's personality, the social and emotional understanding each of us brings to our daily interactions and relationships. This development is about the stuff that really matters, because without learning how to build and live in mutually healthy relationships, we can't learn much of anything else.

You don't even remember 3, but that's where you, as You, really started. Your personality's feet were under you, and you were standing on a firm foundation for building a life...or they weren't, and you weren't. Instead, you were staggering into your preschool years, unprepared.

Quite literally, we adults can create infant and toddler environments that wire a

child's brain for trust, connection, empathy, and continued voracious learning, in a world that works for all of us. We DO know what a quality start looks like for infants and toddlers; thousands of early learning professionals like me can design a developmentally supportive environment for them.

Likewise, we know how to create environments that wire brains for fear, isolation, disregard, and disinterest, to create a world full of conflict. Currently, the media often displays stellar examples of such poor environments.

We begin to bring the former vision—of trust and connection—into reality when we create public policy that ensures healthy food for all infants and toddlers, including adequate workplace support for breast-feeding moms. That still dependent little being is using 60 percent of its nutrition intake to feed this rapidly developing brain (compared to the 25 percent we adults use to feed our brains). Access to family nutrition programs, such as WIC and SNAP, support these



**L. CAROL SCOTT,  
PhD**

Author/Speaker

Nationally known as a thought-leader whose work has shaped early learning systems, Dr. Carol Scott has consulted with government, nonprofit, and philanthropic leaders on state systems in Oklahoma, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri. Dr. Scott has worked at the leading edges of development in our country's systems for quality rating and improvement, professional development, and shared services business models for the child care industry.



important years. Such programs should be widely available with easy access for families who need them.

As parents and teachers, we create that foundation of trust, connection, and learning more directly. That begins with daily, healthy nutrition, yes...and it also relies on our presence, moment by moment. Eye contact, talking (not scolding or yelling, but conversation), hugging and holding, rocking, singing, reading, playing—these are all tools for wiring a healthy brain. Zip-zappety-zap! Every responsive and nurturing interaction we have with a baby stimulates brain cells to wire together for these patterns of trust and connection. At the highest levels of presence, we engage in a sort of social dance with babies and toddlers, called Serve and Return (see the video “5 Steps for Brain Building Serve and Return” at <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/serve-and-return/>).

To ensure that parents and teachers can bring this kind of presence to children also requires good public policy. For example, where adult presence is almost entirely lacking (often due to factors beyond their control, so no leaps to judgment or shaming), we often find Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs are sufficiently toxic to infants’ and toddlers’ development that their outcomes can be seen in adult physical health. If we starve brain development on the front end—either literally with poor nutrition or metaphorically with impoverished home and educational environments—we pay far more

for the results decades later in health care and disease management.

Full government backing for home visiting and early education invests in the firm foundation these children need to break out of generations of continuing poverty and environments that are not supportive of building a firm foundation. The return on this investment has been calculated by the inimitable Nobel Laureate economist, Dr. James Heckman (see The Heckman Equation, online at

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**Your capacity for  
interpersonal trust,  
compassion, empathy and  
respect are in these footings.**

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[heckmanequation.org](http://heckmanequation.org)).

At the community level, and in the home and school, we build on such forward-thinking government policy when we ensure an abundance of protective factors. For all children living with ACEs, which might occur in families of any income, race, or country of origin, these factors that support resilience can mean the difference between a life challenged and a life lifted. Communities can connect parents to each other and resources that help them, support families of all kinds with environments and events designed to include them and foster safe passage for children as

they move in the world outside their homes.

In my work teaching people like you, dear reader, about the crucial importance of early emotional and social development to our adult lives, I use the teaching story of a “Little Red House.” We each build this metaphorical home for our personality, from birth to 7 years. Our construction begins, as with all sturdy houses, with this firm foundation in infancy and toddlerhood. Your capacities for interpersonal trust, compassion, empathy and respect are in these footings, too, my friend. I hope someone helped you build a firm foundation for getting along in the sandboxes of life.

If nobody did, I am sorry. You deserved better, and the good news is that it’s rarely too late for Development Do-Overs on these first three years. You can rewire your brain for greater trust, compassion, and empathy. We’re all born with the raw materials for trust and empathetic inter-dependence with others, we just need to dig back down to our developmental bedrock and find those assets. And, by the way, that’s a life mission worthy of pursuit.

Right now, let us resolve to stop raising generation after generation that needs this re-wiring as adults! Let Kansas be a state where all infants and toddlers get the physical, mental, and emotional nutrition they need to finish—with a flourish—that half-baked development at birth. Let Kansas be known as the state that builds a firm foundation for life under every child. ●





# EVERYONE COUNTS in a Census Year and It's Important to COUNT EVERYONE!



**BY CAROLINE TETER & TERESA RUPP**

In March, everyone in the U.S. will be invited to participate in the 2020 U.S. Census. Invitations will arrive in the mail or be hand-delivered, and it will be important to be counted.

You might be surprised to know that very often young children are not counted. Sometimes parents think the census is only for adults, but it's important to count children, too. The number of children in Kansas helps determine the amount of federal dollars Kansas receives for important services to children. To name only a few: Child Care & Development Block Grant, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Children's Health Insurance Program, WIC, school lunch and breakfast programs, foster care, and adoption assistance. So, it's important to count ALL of our kids!

## Is it safe to participate?

Yes! Individual answers are confidential. No census information will be shared with any other agency or authority. Census information is kept confidential for 72 years!

Here are some ways you can help parents be sure their kids are counted.

1. Tell parents the census is important, and kids need to be counted. Yours is a voice parents trust, so they need to hear from you.
2. Remind parents that it's safe to participate in the census. None of their individual answers will be shared with any other agency or authority – and census data is kept confidential for 72 years.
3. Share more information from the census Bureau with parents:  
[bit.ly/2020CensusBureau](http://bit.ly/2020CensusBureau)

4. Let parents know it's easy to participate, they can do it on their phones!
5. Do something special for Census Day, April 1. You could create a parent-engagement event, as simple as asking parents to stay for a snack at pick-up time and fill out the on-line form while they are at your home or center. It's quick; not many questions.
6. Use the week of March 30 – April 3 to focus on counting and on civic engagement with the children. You can do different counting activities every day that allow them to practice other skills, too. For example, incorporate fine motor skills one day by practicing moving small objects from one container to another with tweezers, counting as they go. You can also talk about the Census as a civic activity such as voting, and let the kids vote (for a snack, for their favorite color, etc.). Share your plan for the week with parents as a reminder of the Census on April 1.

2020 is the year YOU can help make sure all the children in your care get counted. It's important to count all of our kids, because they are counting on us. ●

## What is asked on the census?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Usual place of residence: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of people in household: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Rent or own: \_\_\_\_\_

Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to householder: \_\_\_\_\_

Hispanic origin: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_



## CAROLINE TETER

Early Childhood Specialist, Child Care Aware® of Kansas

Caroline Teter is an Early Childhood Specialist at Child Care Aware® of Kansas, Region 2, located at Child Start, in Wichita. She holds a Master of Education in Teaching and Learning. She serves on the KSAEYC board and is an adjunct professor for Butler Community College's Early Childhood Education Department.



## TERESA RUPP

Executive Director, Child Start, Inc.

Teresa Rupp leads Child Start, Inc. as its Executive Director, partnering with the Board of Directors, leading staff, and working to build community understanding and capacity to support young children and their families. She holds a bachelor's degree in Home Economics from Kansas State University and a Master's of Public Administration from KU.



# Healthy Development

BY MELISSA ROOKER

Healthy development is one of three key building blocks in the Kansas early childhood care and education system. While all children develop at their own pace, it is important to know when children could use more support to be healthy.

Developmental screenings enhance parents' knowledge and honor their experience with their child to know when (or if) to access early intervention or special health care services. Kansas has been working for several years to build an effective and efficient system for developmental screening that recognizes the important roles parents and professionals play in children's developmental health.

In 2018, more than 30,000 parents completed screenings through the Early Childhood Block Grant, Maternal and Child Health programs, and the Kansas State Department of Education's Kindergarten Readiness Snapshot. While we have made great progress, there are 196,826 children from birth to 5 in Kansas who should receive recommended screenings across the broad universe of access points, so we definitely have more work to do.

Kansas early childhood programs are encouraged to monitor developmental health by using the Ages and Stages Questionnaires, 3rd Edition (ASQ-3) and Social Emotional, 2nd Edition (ASQ:SE-2), tools, which are recommended by the Kansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. While several other reliable/evidence-based screening tools exist, we are working to create a common measure for better shared understanding among parents and providers in Kansas.

The ASQ-3 is a parent-completed tool that is easy to use. It recognizes a child's

strengths as well as areas of potential concern. Parents and professionals (such as child care providers) can work together to incorporate activities designed to meet a child's unique needs. By tracking developmental milestones, parents can celebrate their child's accomplishments, identify opportunities for growth, and seek support when needed. Identifying and addressing concerns early on helps improve a child's health, reduces parental stress and increases the benefits of early care and education programs.

Kansas has developed resources for professionals on the subject of developmental health to help them connect with parents:

- Developmental screening passports can be used to help parents keep track of their child's developmental screening record and help parents better understand their child's developmental health and progress.
- Milestone and activity postcards provide quick tips and information. This helps facilitate conversations with parents about the importance of monitoring milestones in development.

Making sure that children receive developmental screening is the foundation of healthy development — just like seeing a dentist or having an annual physical. Routine screening ensures that any concerns are identified as soon as possible. The goal is for children and families to get the support and services they need to thrive. ●



Developmental screening passports and postcards — along with other resources — are available to download for free at: [helpmegrowks.org/provider](http://helpmegrowks.org/provider)



## MELISSA ROOKER

Executive Director,  
Kansas Children's Cabinet  
and Trust Fund

Melissa Rooker was named Executive Director of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund in February of 2019. Before joining the Cabinet, Melissa served three terms in the Kansas House of Representatives, representing House District 25 between 2012 and 2018. Her work in the Legislature focused on children's issues and public education. Before running for office, Melissa spent 15 years as a development executive at Clint Eastwood's Malpaso Productions. She retired in 2001 to raise her two kids. Melissa has served in a variety of leadership positions with local, regional and state PTA in Kansas, and as a legislator served on the Johnson County Education Research Triangle Authority Board, Shawnee Indian Mission Advisory Board and the Kansas Forestry Service Advisory Council. In 1986, Melissa graduated from the University of Kansas with a BFA in Art History. She and her husband, Tom, live in Fairway. They have two adult children, and a grandson.



# Kansas Employers Should Make Child Care Their Business

BY JEN BUMP, MPA

American businesses today face extraordinary challenges locating and hiring skilled workers. In fact, 74 percent of hiring managers surveyed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation agreed there is a lack of qualified talent. The same hiring managers rated worker retention and recruitment as their top two goals for 2020.

So why should employers make child care their business? And why should they make investing in infant and toddler child care a priority?

Any parent of a young child will tell you child care is one of their single biggest considerations when it comes to accepting a job or staying with a job.

Child care is expensive. It is difficult to find. And when it comes to finding and paying for child care, infant and toddler care is the hardest to find and it is the most expensive. Why?

The reason is straightforward: Infants and toddlers require more specialized caregiver attention than older children — therefore, to increase the number of infants and toddlers in a child care program you also need to increase the number of qualified caregivers to maintain the necessary adult-to-child ratios. The result is limited spaces available, higher staffing costs for child care businesses, and higher prices for families.

Research from Child Care Aware® of Kansas shows these assertions hold true in Kansas. Its new publication, *2019 Child Care Supply Demand Report: Exploring the Infant Toddler Gap*, shows child care for infants and toddlers is scarce. The

lack of infant and toddler spaces is so great that in 77 percent of Kansas' counties there are more than 10 children between 0-3 years old competing for a single child care space. Taken in reverse, that means 9 out of every 10 infants and toddlers who need child care go without. Consequently, working families are left scrambling to cobble together a patchwork, child care solution.

On top of availability, quality child care matters to working parents. Not all child care is the same. Quality child care gives working families the peace of mind they need to be productive at work, knowing that their baby is safe in the care of a trusted professional. What's more, 80 percent of brain development occurs in the first 3 years of life — the early experiences of infants and toddlers therefore have a life-long effect.

Unfortunately, Kansas is behind the majority of U.S. states when it comes to offering statewide quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) for child care. While there is a pilot project developing, as of 2017 Kansas was one of just 10 states without a statewide program. QRIS is a valuable mechanism to systematically improve the quality of child care through training and technical assistance, while also offering a dependable tool for families to determine which programs meet the highest levels of quality.

Finally, infant and toddler care might be out of reach due to the high price. According to Child Care Aware of America, the average annual price of child care in Kansas for an infant in a child care center is \$12,584, while it is \$7,384 in a family child care home. The price nearly doubles when you add a second, older child to the equation. For married couples, the expense is more than burdensome. And for single parents, it simply can be overwhelming.

## JEN BUMP

Founder of Bump Collaborative Consulting



Jen Bump is the founder of Bump Collaborative Consulting, a business focusing on evaluating, increasing and leveraging the effect of public and private investments in child care. Before launching her consulting business, she served as Senior Advisor at Child Care Aware® of America. She has nearly 20 years' experience in the Child Care Resource & Referral field. She has a bachelor's degree from Wheaton College (Mass.) and a Master of Public Affairs from Indiana University. She is currently pursuing a Master of Philanthropic Studies from Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University.



The Center for American Progress underscores the significant financial strain experienced by families with infants and toddlers: it says family income drops following the birth of a child, and new parents' spending skyrockets due to new expenses, such as housing and transportation needs. Consequently, this often leads to new credit card debt. The dilemma grows deeper for families of newborns — the choice between going back to work and staying at home leans heavily toward staying at home.

In short, access to quality, affordable child care matters to working families. And if employers want to increase their recruitment and retention of skilled workers in 2020, they should invest in child care.

Even economists agree — investing in high-quality care for children 0-3 years old can have a 13 percent return on investment, significantly higher than the 7-10 percent return for investments starting at preschool.

There's more. Investment isn't limited to just financing child care or opening a child care program for employees. Thanks to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Child Care Resource & Referral agencies such as Child Care Aware® of Kansas, getting started is easy.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's 2017 report, *Workforce of Today, Workforce of Tomorrow: The Business Case for High-Quality Child Care*, outlines 10 action steps for business investment in child care. From joining early learning coalitions and understanding the child care landscape to arranging a site visit at a local child care program, CCR&Rs make the best advisors and partners for businesses. Visit [www.ks.childcareaware.org](http://www.ks.childcareaware.org) or call 855-750-3343 to learn how they can help. ●



# Parent Helpline

BY PAMELA NOBLE

Since 1993, Kansas Children's Service League's Parent Helpline (1-800-CHILDREN) has offered a voice that will listen and empathize with callers' concerns and provide help with simple questions or complex situations.

Information, referrals and support are provided anonymously statewide to parents, relatives, caregivers, youth and professionals, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This line is designed to meet the needs of parents and caregivers who feel isolated and frustrated when trying to meet the challenges of raising children. In calendar year 2019, the Parent Helpline answered 1,648 calls. Inquiries can be made via email or text using [1800CHILDREN@kcs.org](mailto:1800CHILDREN@kcs.org). The Helpline utilizes Language Line services to translate for non-English speaking callers.

The Parent Helpline is also available as a mobile phone app. This is a free download that can be found by searching The Parent Helpline in either the Android or Apple stores. The app also contains links for Parent Tip Cards on the KCSL website and has simple, one-touch dialing for those who need more information.

Phone counselors document the type of support the caller is seeking, information or resources offered, and if the caller said they received the information/support they were seeking.

Top reasons for calls to the Parent Helpline include basic parenting, child development, behavior management, questions about reporting child abuse and neglect, mental health, legal concerns and information about programs or services.

Phone counselors strive to increase protective factors using the following strategies:

- Parents are assured that it is OK to feel frustrated and are provided skills to identify stress triggers, recognize coping strategies and enhance problem-solving skills helping them to deal with stress. (Parental Resilience)

- Parents are informed of the benefits of a broad social network and are provided ways to broaden social networks. (Social Connections)
- Child development information is provided to help parents identify what can be expected at different developmental stages and what to look for as the child or youth grows, helping children reach their full potential. (Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development)
- Families are referred to essential services, supports and resources for basic needs. This allows them to better focus on their role as parents. (Concrete Support in Times of Need)
- Information is provided to encourage parents to connect with their children and become more involved in their lives

Call the Parent Helpline at either 1-800-CHILDREN or 1-800-332-6378 for resources, referrals and other information. ●

## PAMELA NOBLE

Assistant Director, Prevent Child Abuse Kansas, Kansas Children's Service League

Pamela Noble is the Assistant Director of Prevent Child Abuse Kansas at the Kansas Children's Service League. She has worked for KCSL in a variety of capacities since 2005. Currently she supervises the Crisis Nursery program, the Parent Helpline, Community Resource Library and the parent engagement and leadership programs, as well as planning conferences and the statewide Child Abuse Prevention month campaign.



# The Challenges of Finding Infant Care in Rural Kansas

## ONE FAMILY'S EXPERIENCE

BY ISAAC & BRANDELL HECKER

Frustrating, stressful, fear-inducing—all words used by new parents Isaac and Brandell to describe their experience looking for infant care in rural Kansas. They never imagined the challenge that lie ahead of them. Knowing the importance of selecting the right type and quality of care for their coming baby, they started their search almost immediately after finding out that they were expecting.

"We didn't want to leave anything to chance," said Brandell. "But once we started and we realized how hard it was to find infant care, we began to wonder if it was even worth it. We never imagined it would be this hard—that we would have so few choices."

"The process was not fun," said Isaac. "As arrangements fell through over and over, we had to start over. The whole process was stressful, and it was hard to stay optimistic."

As call after call to childcare providers resulted in being told there were no openings, they were afraid they would lose the race to find care for their infant before Brandell's maternity leave ended. After months of searching, and with no viable options in sight, they ended up cobbling together a string of temporary arrangements including friends, family members, and licensed childcare providers. Nine months after sweet baby Marlowe arrived, they finally found permanent infant care. "It wasn't ideal and certainly not what we had hoped for, for our daughter," said Brandell. "There weren't enough options for us to feel like we actually had a choice," said Isaac, who went on to describe feeling so frustrated with the lack of infant openings that when they did find a program that had an infant opening, they were suspicious as to why. "Was there something wrong with the provider? With the program? Why did this one have an opening when no one else did? It was awful," Isaac said.

"Even harder than not finding anyone who takes infants, our only reference for quality was word of mouth," Isaac said. "We had to rely on other people's opinions to tell us if the care was good. There was no measuring stick for us to use."

Brandell and Isaac did have access to childcare licensing inspection reports, which they reviewed on the KDHE website. But they found that the reports stopped short of providing all the information they needed to make a fully informed decision. The licensing inspection reports focused almost exclusively on health and safety. While they did want to know about the health and safety of the programs they were considering, they also wanted to know about the learning environment, the curriculum, family engagement, and the provider's qualifications. "But there was nothing like that available to us. It felt like a crapshoot," said Isaac.

"We were about to choose someone we trusted with the life of our child. It didn't feel good that we were at the mercy of the few places that simply had an opening for an infant. That's too big a decision to be left to luck," said Brandell.

Unfortunately, there were very few resources to help them determine the quality of care, which was vitally important to them.

But Isaac and Brandell's story does have a happy ending, albeit a full year after starting their infant care search. They finally found their "forever provider," Beth Heimann, owner of Little Ducklings Family Child Care.

"We got lucky," said Brandell, "Beth is GREAT! One in a million!" Both parents wanted a family childcare provider who would bond with their baby and love and care for her as if she would her own, provide healthy meals and a safe environment, stimulating learning activities, and who engaged families. They describe Beth as a licensed family childcare provider who has a degree in early childhood education, and who takes her program "to the next level." They love the fact that Beth asks about family routines at home so she can provide consistency, such as with nap times. She asks about the foods that Marlowe likes so she can add them to her meal plans.

"On water Wednesdays, Beth makes sure to have extra adults to help, which gives us peace of mind knowing there are extra hands and eyes to be there during water play. She always texts us pictures of what Marlowe is doing throughout the day and that keeps us connected. She has a monthly newsletter that keeps families engaged in what's happening at the day care. She plans learning activities and there is always something new and fun for the kids," said Brandell. And according to both parents, they know that Marlowe is happy and well cared for.

"When its time to go to daycare, Marlowe says, 'Yay!' When we get there, Marlowe reaches for Beth and always gets a hug in return. When we pick her up at the end of the day, she is relaxed, and smiling and happy."

As they look forward to continuing to grow their family, they are left to wonder if their next search for infant care will be this hard, if they will have enough programs to choose from, and if their next provider will be as wonderful. For now, they are concentrating on how happy they are with their current provider. ●







# ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

**BY JOHN PRESLEY**

Attachment is a word in mental health circles that has taken on a dominant connotation as relating to disruptions and disorders of relationships, particularly regarding the development of children.

There are extraordinary developments in the process of understanding, diagnosing and treating attachment disorders. This has allowed a justifiable degree of optimism to develop in helping children recover a sense of trust and hope for future relationships.

However, treatment is not the role most people play in promoting a child's healthy development. Every significant person in the life of a child has a part in helping them grow in ways that encourage positive relationships.

Not only can we participate in this process with individual children, but we can knowledgeably advocate for all children to have the environment, tools and opportunities to become healthy participants in our society.

Theories about attachment date back to the beginning work of John Bowlby in the 1930s through '50s. His work identified how separation of parents and children during such times as inpatient hospitalization could result in extreme anxiety for the child and difficulty responding to care giving by another person.



Later theories addressed the effect of traumatic events on the capacity of children to see the world as a safe place. Beginning in the 1950s, Erik Erickson worked to set out his stages of psychosocial development beginning with “Trust vs Mistrust,” in which infants learn whether the world is a safe place in which their needs can be met. While Erickson framed this within the first 18 months of life, Bruce Perry later offered the idea that fetal trauma during pregnancy, as well as events in infancy and early childhood, contribute to the development of disrupted attachment.

Subsequent work on helping to repair damaged relationship capacity in young children leads to ideas for promoting positive growth and development. One step is to gain a better understanding of brain development.

Early in our life, we don’t “think” — that part of our brain doesn’t develop until approximately age 3. The most active and functional element — the brainstem — is simply focused on basic needs of safety and comfort. Rick Gaskill makes the point in a recent article in *PLAYTHERAPY* (Sept. 2019) that, “The low brain (the brainstem) lacks rational, logical thought and does not understand language.” He also noted that sensory experiences are the most effective elements in promoting a child’s learning that the world can be a safe place.

This leads to what might be the startling understanding that words are of significantly less importance to early childhood development than active, repetitive play that the child enjoys. I fondly remember playing “pat-a-cake” with our daughters, little knowing that I was using patterned, repetitive activity to engage them in relationship building. It was simply something we did that was fun for them and us.

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### Allowing ourselves the freedom to act more and talk less contributes to a child’s growth.

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It is this understanding that talking is not teaching for the young child that then allows us to focus on the things a child enjoys, to introduce them to a safe world with dependable caregivers. It is important to understand that what we do is more important than what we say. Indeed, the old saying, “Actions speak louder than words” now has neuroscience backing. Allowing ourselves the freedom to act more and talk less contributes to a child’s growth more than we might have thought.

It should be noted that language development is an important part of not only this stage of development but throughout adolescence. However, language development is primarily the process of learning a tool rather than as a way to form attachments. Indeed, harsh language has the potential to traumatize a child, yet when offered in an encouraging and comforting tone, language can support the child’s confidence that they are in a safe, caring environment.

While the use of patterned, repetitive activities allows us to contribute to an individual child’s growth, there are steps that also promote positive development for more than one person. It clearly has been established in a number of settings that environmental risks and insults negatively affect children’s ability to develop into caring responsible people. These include such things as exposure to smoking/substance use, poor nutrition, poverty, domestic violence, family mental health problems, as well as being separated from parents — as in foster placement.

Our additional responsibility is then to advocate for a nurturing community that promotes exposure to caring and compassion and reduces exposure to threats against our children’s safety.

Healthy attachment benefits each child and each community. ●



**JOHN PRESLEY**  
Retired

John Presley, MSW, focused on work with children and families throughout his career. He has worked in juvenile justice, child psychiatry, residential treatment, pediatrics and community mental health. He retired from Central Kansas Mental Center after 24 years.





# GET GROWING WITH LOCAL FOODS

**BY BARB DEPEW, RD, LD**

Children have a healthy curiosity about the world around them; however, it is shocking to see the number of children who have no idea where their food comes from. They simply believe that food magically appears in the grocery store or on their plate.

Food habits, preferences and attitudes about food are developed at an early age. One way to encourage lifelong healthy eating is by exposing children to how food is grown and produced.

Exposing children to local foods, through Farm to Plate in Child Nutrition Programs, encompasses efforts to serve locally produced foods as part of meals and snacks as well as involving children in activities such as taste tests, cooking lessons and gardening. Farm to Plate can be as simple as enjoying a fresh tomato from your own container garden or enjoying a variety of seasonal foods purchased from a grocer, vendor, farmer, food hub or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).

Take a field trip to “get growing” with local foods. Visit a local farm or explore a farmers market to provide hands-on learning experiences for children. The library contains books to help introduce new foods and educate children about agriculture and the life cycle of foods.

Gardens are another way to educate kids as they touch and feel the dirt, seeds, fruits and vegetables.

Research shows that garden-based learning can increase children’s vegetable consumption and result in improved recognition of vegetables. It also can improve the preferences for and willingness to taste vegetables. Use these ideas to incorporate learning with gardening activities:

- Have children assist with planting. Incorporate math skills such as measuring, counting and sequencing.
- Teach food safety habits such as handwashing and washing produce as children participate in simple food preparation activities.
- Provide the opportunity to try a variety of foods. Talk about the color, shape, texture, and taste of new foods. If children are hesitant to taste a new food item, considering asking them to ‘kiss it goodbye’ which might inspire them to try!

- Offer multiple opportunities to taste test foods. It can take a child up to 10 exposures before they might accept a new food.
- Use produce or other foods to create garden art and crafts that will allow children to explore foods in another modality.

Interested in starting a garden but not sure where to start? Contact your county Extension office for resources such as seasonal garden guides. Master Gardeners are eager to assist with garden planning.

Early child care is the perfect place to get children growing with local foods by featuring fresh food and providing nutrition education for our youngest eaters. Child care centers and day care homes participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) are encouraged to engage in Farm to Plate activities. The CACFP contributes to the wellness, healthy growth, and development of young children. The CACFP ensures children have access to healthy foods while they are in childcare and encourages providers to adopt best practices in meal planning beyond the required meal pattern standards, such as featuring local foods in meals and snacks. ●

**Resources:**

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/farm-to-preschool>

<http://gardening.cals.cornell.edu/program-tools/benefits-and-research/key-findings/>



**BARB DEPEW**

Farm to Plate  
Project Director

Barb Depew is a Registered Dietician with a Bachelor of Science degree from Kansas State University. She has worked as a Child Nutrition Consultant for eleven years with Kansas Department of Education. She is the Farm to Plate Project Director. Barb works with Child Nutrition sponsors, producers and partners across Kansas to introduce food initiatives through nutrition education and incorporating healthy foods onto children’s plates.

# Supporting *Healthy* Social-Emotional Development

BY ERICA FIGUEROA

Caregivers play an integral role in assisting children achieve healthy social-emotional development. Social-emotional development is the ability of children to recognize and understand their own feelings and the feelings of others, manage and express strong feelings, regulate their own behavior, empathize with others, as well as establish and maintain relationships.

Babies, toddlers, and children rely on nurturing relationships with adults to assist them in learning how to control or respond appropriately to their emotions. A beneficial tool that can be utilized to promote this relationship is the serve-and-return mechanism, which occurs when a caregiver attends to a child and provides the appropriate reciprocal interactions. By providing nurturing relationships, caregivers facilitate the opportunity for children to develop neural connections between the prefrontal cortex and other regions of the brain. This allows the child to develop more efficient executive function skills—such as working memory, self-control, and flexible thinking, all of which are needed to succeed academically, personally, and professionally. The foundational effect that early adult caregiver relationships have on the social-emotional development of a child emphasizes the need for collaboration between child care providers and the families of the children in their care.

## Policy for Incorporating Social-Emotional Development Supports

Both at the state and national levels, policymakers are emphasizing the importance of social-emotional development in early care and education settings. The Kansas Early Learning Standards, published in 2012 by the Kansas Department of Education, include a section on social-emotional development to assist early care and education practitioners in their efforts to prepare the children in their care for kindergarten. (For more information: [bit.ly/2vrTWKa](http://bit.ly/2vrTWKa)).

In 2016, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services along with the U.S. Department of Education, released a policy statement that addresses family engagement in early childhood systems. The statement emphasized that when families and child care providers support each other in their roles of developing a child, the child experiences better developmental outcomes. (For more information: [bit.ly/36zbReD](http://bit.ly/36zbReD)).

## Supporting Social-Emotional Development in your Program

Below are some resources, practices and policies that can be incorporated into your program to support social-emotional learning.

- Create a predictable and nurturing environment, establish trusting relationships, intentionally support children in developing social skills, recognize and talk about emotions, encourage positive behaviors and use positive discipline practices (For specific steps for each age category visit: [bit.ly/37yYtsh](http://bit.ly/37yYtsh) and [bit.ly/2tU8Kkb](http://bit.ly/2tU8Kkb))
- Create a policy to screen for social-emotional concerns using a validated screener, such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaire Social-Emotional: 2™ ([bit.ly/2uzIwi](http://bit.ly/2uzIwi))
- Know community referral resources in case the screener suggests a concern, for example, early intervention services or early childhood mental health providers.
- Attend continuing education opportunities that present topics on social-emotional development to learn up-to-date information from experts in the field.



## ERICA FIGUEROA

Research Project Coordinator for Public Partnerships & Research, University of Kansas

## Supporting Families with Their Child's Social-Emotional Development

Outlined below are some resources that families can utilize to support social-emotional learning.

- Talk with families about social-emotional milestones ([bit.ly/2GrCCY3](http://bit.ly/2GrCCY3)) and about downloading the CDC milestone tracking app ([bit.ly/2RT6Jgf](http://bit.ly/2RT6Jgf))
- Direct families to the Help Me Grow Kansas website for information on social-emotional development and activities ([www.helpmegrowks.org/family](http://www.helpmegrowks.org/family))
- Connect with 24-hour, confidential and free early childhood resources and professionals by calling 1-800-CHILDREN ●

Erica Figueroa serves as the Project Coordinator on the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Impact Project and supports other Title V connected initiatives including Help Me Grow, Kansas Connecting Communities (KCC) and Lifting Young Families Towards Excellence (LYFTE). Mrs. Figueroa graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree from Duke University. She majored in Psychology and minored in Global Health. During her time at Duke, she worked in an infant cognitive development lab, examining the process of language development as a child matures. She is currently pursuing a Master of Counseling Psychology at the University of Kansas. She is also a certified trainer for the Ages and Stages Questionnaire® (ASQ) and actively provides trainings across the state of Kansas.





# Serve & Return

## Interacting to Build Brain Development

BY CAROLINE TETER

Caregivers are responsible to help build a strong foundation for healthy brain development. In recent years, scientific research has described how critical brain development truly is in the early years of life. Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child states that "700 to 1,000 new neural connections form every second in the first few years of life." These neural connections are the key for a strong foundation of brain development. We build these neural connections with everyday interactions. These interactions are often referred to as "serve and return."

Serve and return refers to the process of back-and-forth exchanges, similar to a game of tennis, ping pong, etc. One side cannot do all the work to be successful. These back-and-forth exchanges lead to success in developing brains. Without them, a child's brain might release too many stressful hormones leading to adverse childhood experiences. Executing serve-and-return interactions costs no money, and the minimal effort leads to maximum results.

How do we begin to interact? Caregivers are pulled in multiple directions every part of the day. It is critical we make time for undivided attention and become active participants in children's play. Put away distractions such as phones or computers and sit on the floor with your child. Children are able to express their interests and focus without the use of words. Engage in their conversation by responding to nonverbal and verbal cues. When your infant smiles and starts moving their legs in an excited motion; this is their serve to you. You will return the serve with a smile and/or speaking back to them. It is when you do not return the serve that the neural connection does not get formed.

The key is paying attention to what the child is noticing. When a toddler points to an apple at the grocery store, this is the serve. You must notice and respond to return the serve. "You see the apple?" Wait for a response. "I know you like to eat apples, don't you?" Wait for a response. "Do you think we should get one for home?" You must give a child's brain time to hear what you are saying, process it, and then return with a sound, motion, or word depending on the age. When we go through the motions of serve and return too quickly, we do not allow the children to return the serve, halting the neural building process. It is through serve and return processes such as this that the child's social, cognitive, and communication skills are being built.

Capitalizing on everyday interactions, becoming an active participant, and noticing children's cues are the essential components in building a solid foundation for brain development. The brain's architecture is strengthened over time and through repetition. Remember to be patient, and that as the child grows, so will your serve and return interactions. ●



### CAROLINE TETER

Early Childhood  
Specialist, Child Care  
Aware® of Kansas

Caroline Teter is an Early Childhood Specialist at Child Care Aware® of Kansas, Region 2, located at Child Start, in Wichita. She holds a Master of Education in Teaching and Learning. She serves on the KSAEYC board and is an adjunct professor for Butler Community College's Early Childhood Education Department.





# CHILD CARE PREPARE

## Infant Toddler Child Care Emergency Preparation Introduction

**BY JILLIAN RITTER**

Caring for infants and toddlers is a big responsibility under normal conditions. However, when something unforeseen happens, such as a natural disaster or an emergency, caring for children becomes an even greater responsibility.

Infants and toddlers are especially vulnerable in emergencies and helping them get to safety requires extra planning and preparation. This is because children between birth and 3 have unique needs, such as:

- Reliance on caregivers for physical, nutritional, and emotional needs
- Communication limitations
- Limited mobility
- Need for safety and protection from harmful items
- Greater susceptibility to hazards, including chemicals and smoke

### INFANT TODDLER EVACUATION SURVEY

Child Care Aware® of America surveyed early learning professionals to learn how they prepare for emergencies and evacuate infants and toddlers in their care. More than 2,200 child care providers participated in the survey.

Almost one in every five respondents said they have had to evacuate infants and toddlers in an emergency. The most common emergencies were fire, fire alarms, or smoke; gas leaks or gas smell; or severe weather.

### EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

When comparing what worked well during an actual emergency evacuation to what works well during practice drills, there was a lot of similarity.

Child care providers can better prepare to care for infants and toddlers during and after emergencies by:

- Having a written plan and making sure everyone knows his or her role
- Performing regular practice drills
- Having a method to evacuate multiple children at once
- Having emergency supplies prepared and readily available
- Ensuring that adults stay calm
- Making sure there are enough adults to help with infants and toddlers

All child care providers in Kansas are required to have an emergency plan and share that plan with parents. They are also required to practice drills on a regular basis.

### PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents can help child care providers emergency preparedness efforts by making sure they're familiar with the emergency plan before an emergency happens. It is also important to follow all procedures during and after an emergency so the child care provider can effectively implement the plan.

Consider asking your child care provider these questions:

- Do you have an emergency preparedness plan for disasters that are likely to occur in our area?
- How will you safely evacuate my child to a safe, predetermined location?
- How and when will I be notified if a disaster occurs when my child is in care?
- If I cannot get to my child during or after the disaster, how will you continue to care for my child?

- Have you and your staff received training on how to respond to my child's physical and emotional needs during and after a disaster?
- Do you have an emergency supply kit with enough items to meet my child's needs for at least 72 hours?
- Do the state and local emergency management agencies and responders know about your child care program and where it is located?
- How may I help you during and after a disaster?
- After a disaster occurs, how will I be notified about your plan to reopen? ●

### RESOURCES

*Child Care Aware® of America created resources based on the shared insights of child care providers who daily care for infants and toddlers. To view those resources, or for more information on child care emergency preparedness, visit [www.childcareprepare.org](http://www.childcareprepare.org).*



**JILLIAN RITTER**

Child Care Aware®  
of America

Jillian Ritter is a data analyst for Child Care Aware® of America and a member of its Emergency Preparedness Team. Her professional service includes more than 20 years in the early care and education field in a variety of roles. She has a master's degree in youth development and a bachelor's degree in Child Development.



# Self-Care FOR New Parents



BY MICHELLE ALLEN

We live in a world where there is a seemingly constant stream of media-sharing “top tips” to do just about anything right, including what everything should look like and how to be the best parent.

This information can be overwhelming, and the comparison game can be a scary one to play, particularly for a first-time parent. It is especially important for new mothers to take care of their physical and mental health during the postnatal period, the one right after giving birth. Below are some practical tips for staying sane during some of the best and more sleepless days of your life:

**1** Get some sleep — you’ve likely heard the term, “sleep when the baby sleeps,” and here is why it is important: it resets your brain, helps you stay emotionally stable, and recharges your body. It also might be helpful to establish a sleep shift schedule with your partner to allow each of you time to rest and share responsibilities.

**2** Accept help from family and friends, but also remember to set boundaries — It is so helpful to have family and friends help with things such as laundry, dishes, and cooking. This will allow you time to rest and bond with your new baby. However, as the parent, you are always in the driver’s seat. If you’re not ready to have people around the baby, or if you just need a break, schedule for another time that works better for you.

**3** If you have questions, ASK! — Ask those in your support circle as they’ll likely be chomping at the bit to give advice and their experiences. Also, write down questions as you have them. As you do this, you’ll be able to identify who best can answer each question. Some of the best places for answers include your baby’s doctor, your doctor, your partner’s doctor, or your home visitor. If you have questions and are unsure whom to ask, reach out to one of these people, and they’ll get you connected to the right person or organization.

**4** If you or your partner still are feeling the “baby blues” or something just doesn’t seem right, talk to a doctor. It’s OK, and there is support. The doctor will be able to answer questions, and help you find the right support for you and your family. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 1 in 9 moms are affected by postnatal mood disorders, which affects the entire family. You and/or your partner are not in this alone.

Overall, new parent, you know best for yourself and your new baby and you CAN do this. It is exhausting, emotional, and definitely not glamorous, but being a parent is worth all of it. ●



**MICHELLE ALLEN**

Department for Children  
and Families

Michelle has a bachelor’s degree in Child Development with an emphasis in preschool teaching from Michigan State University and is currently pursuing her master’s degree in Human Development & Family Sciences at Oklahoma State University. In the past, Michelle has worked in various early education settings including Head Start and special education.



# 2019 Child Care Supply Demand Report

BY SAMANTHA SULSAR

Many Kansas families, employers and early childhood professionals find the availability of high-quality child care in their community falls short of meeting their needs. This is especially true for families searching for infant or toddler care. These families often find they have very limited options. Some families might have no choice at all.

The challenge might be even greater for parents searching for programs that provide care during nontraditional hours or for children with special needs. While family dynamics have changed to include some parents working second or third shifts, only a small percentage of child care centers and group child care homes offer care during evening hours and even fewer provide overnight care.

Compounding the challenge, the number of Family and Group Child Care Homes in Kansas continues to decrease. In fact, statewide, communities have lost 501 family and group child care homes over the last three years. While there has been an increase of 31 child care center programs statewide, 38 percent of Kansas counties do not have a child care center.

The *2019 Child Care Supply Demand Report: Exploring the Infant Toddler Gap* focuses on the difficult challenges facing communities statewide, and the conclusion is:

Families ARE struggling to meet their child care needs.

- They are competing with other families for limited child care slots, especially for infants and toddlers.
- They are reaching out to family members and friends, often piecing together childcare plans that lack consistency, stability

- and routine for their children.
- They're accessing illegal care.

Early childhood professionals who provide child care, especially for infants and toddlers, ARE struggling with financial insecurity.

- They are experiencing wage penalties, earning \$1.05 an hour less when compared to early childhood professionals working with children 3-5 years of age.
- They are limiting their ability to generate revenue. Opening infant and toddler slots restricts the number of older children they can enroll in their programs. This might prevent programs from offering infant and toddler care.

Employers and businesses ARE struggling with managing operations.

- They are encountering challenges with staff recruitment and retention. Working families without child care options cannot work.
- They are affected by absenteeism and tardiness.

Where do communities begin the journey to build and sustain a child care workforce that is instrumental in preparing children for school and life? Strategies might include:

- Increasing the availability of licensed child care slots by exploring a variety of options, such as new-provider grants, recruitment stipends, and/or longevity bonuses.

## 2019 Child Care Supply Demand Report

Exploring The Infant Toddler Gap



- Encouraging child care programs to serve infants and toddlers by offering slot stipends that will compensate for the higher costs related to providing high-quality care to this population.
- Expanding grants for child care programs to purchase material/equipment necessary to care for infants and toddlers.

These certainly are not the only strategies for addressing child care issues. We encourage you to brainstorm with community coalitions and reach out to families in your communities that use child care. To view, download or print the report, please visit [www.ks.childcareaware.org](http://www.ks.childcareaware.org). If you have questions, call our office at 855-750-3343 or email us at [info@ks.childcareaware.org](mailto:info@ks.childcareaware.org).



**SAMANTHA SULSAR**

Child Care Aware®  
of Kansas

Samantha Sulsar graduated from Fort Hays State University and has worked for Child Care Aware® of Kansas for 9 years.





# Participating in WIC Does Make a Difference

**BY JULIE NORMAN**

The WIC Program — officially titled the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children — began in 1972 as a pilot program in Kentucky. Doctors had been reporting to Congress that they were seeing low-income mothers with health issues related to nutrient deficiencies. WIC became a nationwide federal program in 1975.

Since then, there have been numerous studies showing that participation in WIC improves birth outcomes and the health of mothers and children.

WIC provides three types of benefits: supplemental foods, nutrition education and referrals for health and social services. WIC also emphasizes breastfeeding and provides education and support to moms to help in their breastfeeding journey. In the last decade, breastfeeding rates have risen substantially. Forty-one counties in Kansas also have Breastfeeding Peer Counselors for additional support.

Since the summer of 2018 the Kansas

WIC program has provided electronic benefit cards for clients to purchase WIC foods at approved grocery stores. Clients, store cashiers and WIC staff rave about how easy it is to use their eWIC card. The use of these cards has alleviated some of the negative feelings associated with WIC.

So what foods are available to WIC families? The WIC program has different food benefits for different clients. Particular foods have been chosen because they help fill the gaps in the average client's diet.

For example, research shows that income-eligible women and children often do not get enough iron in their diet. So, WIC provides foods such as iron-fortified cereal, beans and peanut butter. Most Americans do not get enough fiber in their diets, so WIC foods include whole grains. Many of us do not eat enough fruits and vegetables, and WIC provides from \$8 to \$11 a month to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. The family gets to choose which fruits and vegetables they want to buy through their benefit amount.





The WIC program is a part of keeping families healthy, but some families eligible for WIC might not know about it.

Your help is needed to spread the word to families about WIC. To be eligible for WIC families, can make up to 185 percent of the federal poverty level. In February 2020, that amount is \$47,638 a year for a family of four. Many people are surprised to learn that a family with an income of \$47,638 could be eligible for WIC. WIC is a preventative public health program supporting all families who qualify.

There are a couple of other eligibility requirements. WIC recipients must be a woman who is pregnant, 6 months or fewer post-partum or breastfeeding an infant less than 1 year old; or an infant or child up to the age of 5. Nutritional risk of applicants is also reviewed.

Why are we so passionate about WIC?

Children participating in WIC, SNAP, or both programs have lower rates of anemia and nutritional deficiency, compared to low-income children who don't participate.

Breastfeeding initiation rates among WIC participants rose from 56 percent in 1994 to 83 percent in 2013.

The obesity rate for 2- to 4-year-old chil-

dren participating in WIC has declined by 0.34 percentage points a year since the 2009 WIC food package revisions. Those revisions included the addition of whole grains, yogurt, fruits and vegetables and other culturally appropriate foods.

According to a newly released study in 2019, investing \$1 in prenatal WIC services saves about \$2.48 in medical, educational and productivity costs over a newborn's lifetime by preventing preterm birth.

Infant mortality rates, especially for African Americans, are lower if the mother participated in WIC during pregnancy.

Prenatal and early childhood participation in WIC is associated with stronger cognitive development at 2 years old and better performance on reading assessments in elementary school.

In 2017, WIC lifted 279,000 people above the poverty line, according to Census Bureau data.

FRAC (Food Research & Action Center) has several fact sheets where you can

read more about the benefits of participating in WIC. ***Spread the word: WIC Works!*** ●



**JULIE NORMAN**

RDN, LD

Julie Norman, RDN, LD, oversees nutrition education for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's Nutrition and WIC Services Section in the Bureau of Family Health. Julie has a Bachelor of Science degree in Dietetics and Institutional Management from Kansas State University. She has served as president of the Kansas Nutrition Council and on the boards of the Kansas Association of Nutrition and Dietetics and the Wichita District Dietetic Association. She has worked as a dietitian in many settings, including clinical, nutrition support, Senior Nutrition Program, long-term care consultant, private practice and with the Kansas State Department of Education as a Child Nutrition consultant. She was also the executive director of a nonprofit agency serving seniors.





# A Beautiful Bouquet of Books for Babies

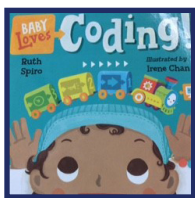
BY ALICE EBERHART-WRIGHT



I have been working with young children for more than 50 years and am an infant mental health specialist. I love children's books. Writing

about them keeps me growing.

I long have been familiar with all the textures and new formats for board books: books with wheels, books that can go in the bathtub, books that have puppets attached, that have levers to pull and busy-box kinds of activities built in. What I wasn't prepared for was the effect of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) on board books. On a recent visit to the Kansas Children's Discovery Center, I began to pick up books in the GROW area and here is what I found:

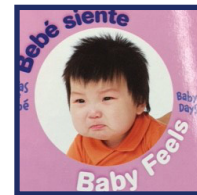


***Baby Loves Coding*** by Ruth Spire, and illustrated by Irene Chan: On the back it says, "Baby's train is in the toy box — all the way across the room. Can Baby think step-by-step like a coder to get it?" With today's emphasis on technology, coding is a primary task in schools. Babies are exposed to algorithms through their very first books (I had to look up algorithm!). Parents and other caregivers have to learn about algorithms themselves to prepare children for living in a technological society, but step by step, we can do it.



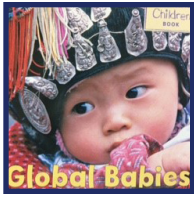
***8 Little Planets*** by Chris Ferrie, with pictures by Lizzy Doyle: This is one of those books that babies love because the pages have concentric holes that they can stick their fingers in to turn the next page. We are going beyond *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* and *Good Night, Moon* when we read a simple statement about a key characteristic of each planet, such as: Saturn has a ring around it.

That might explain the 3½-year-old who could take colored chalk and draw the planets on the Discovery Center's outside patio in an approximation of their positions in the sky. I asked his father how he knew how to do that. "He watches PBS shows," his father said," and we read lots of books." On the back of this board book also are simple fascinating facts for the adults.



***Baby Feels or Baby Siente*** (Little Scholastic book in both English and Spanish) features babies from different cultures experiencing a variety of emotions. Books should help children have words not only for their body parts but also for their emotions. When children see photographs of babies, they should see babies who have a variety of skin colors and features. We live in a culture where we hope babies will grow up to feel good about themselves and all those around them, and to have words for the wide range of emotions that appear in random patterns.



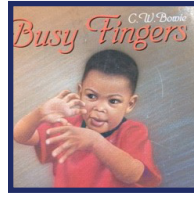


**Global Babies** (A Global Fund for Children book) features wonderful head shots of babies in native clothing from all over the world (notated on each page). The Global Fund is a DC-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to transform the lives of the world's most vulnerable children; just another way of using books with babies that support our wish for a kind, loving world.



**First Explorers Astronauts** is a book with sturdy pages to push, pull, and slide. It's a book to encourage the interest of toddlers who see things on cell phones and television

programs about the scientific world that we have become fascinated with in just the past century. These early books offer and observe interests in things that might blossom into full careers in the child's adult life.



**Busy Fingers** by C.W. Bowie, and illustrated by Fred Willingham: This board book shows close-ups of important words and phrases expressed through sign language, such as "I love you." As we learned to focus on important brain development in the first three years of life, we became aware of how important it was for babies to grow up with communication skills from the very beginning. Since many children have difficulty with speech, sign language became increasingly important and now is used by many parents with typically developing babies to provide a way to communicate before they can talk.



**Little Poems** is a Baby Einstein book (Playful Discoveries) and is one of those books that we wouldn't have found during my child development training. It's a book of real poetry, putting words and meter together in ways that should inspire a baby's little brain to experience classic quality in literature. Shakespeare, Yeats, Langston Hughes? Why not? We want the very best for our young children.

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# Magic Moments

For 30 years the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network has been a voice for child care professionals, young children and their families statewide. Throughout 2020, we will be sharing relevant data and opportunities for you to engage with us!

We want to hear from you - we will be seeking stories about how partners, parents, child care professionals and others utilize the services of Child Care Aware of Kansas. Tell us what we've done well or share your creative ideas for our next 30 years!

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to [info@ks.childcareaware.org](mailto:info@ks.childcareaware.org) to share your excitement,  
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