

A publication of Child Care Aware® of Kansas

Kansas **child**

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IN THIS ISSUE

Realities & Emerging
Trends in Child Care

- The Struggle to Find Child Care
- Child Care as Economic Development
- How Providers Can Save for Retirement
- Partnering with Public Schools

Realities & Emerging Trends in Child Care



The one thing I'm certain about, in this very uncertain world, is that no one can tackle the challenge of child care alone.

Our shared reality here in Kansas is that child care is essential to a thriving economy. If nothing else, the past year has underscored the precarious nature of owning and operating a child care program — whether as a family home provider, a center director, or an after-school program.

The past year has also served as a “calling in” for potential partners across the state. Communities across Kansas are gathering together to prioritize child care as never before. Business leaders, parents, schools, and elected officials are leading bold conversations about how to address local challenges, serving as catalysts for truly innovative approaches.

I believe that local communities already have the assets, resources, and answers to solve child care challenges. That means our role — the role of Child Care Aware® of Kansas and all our early childhood partners — is to work alongside communities, helping them build on their existing strengths.

And yet. On the state level, we have an opportunity to support local innovation with broad, systemic approaches, capitalizing on our knowledge of what works and what doesn't. As a state, we can be as bold and brave as the local communities we support. Our collective child care challenge is big enough — hard enough — that there's room for both local innovation and statewide infrastructure-building.

In this issue of *Kansas Child*, you'll hear from experts at the local, state, and national levels about emerging trends in child care solutions, innovation that leverages data and shared learning, and strategies to support scaling new efforts across communities.

I am grateful for each and every child care provider, family, employer, civic leader, elected official, and community member engaging in this work. We *will* tackle this challenge, and we'll do it together.



KELLY DAVYDOV

Executive Director,
Child Care Aware® of Kansas

Kelly Davydov joined Child Care of Kansas as Executive Director in September 2020. Kelly's professional background includes leadership for two key initiatives in Iowa: the state's early childhood system-building effort, Early Childhood Iowa, and its 2-Gen anti-poverty initiative. Kelly, her husband Dmitry, and their two sons (Ethan, 12, and Henry, 10) have made Kansas City their new home. Together, they enjoy exploring state and national parks and farmer's markets and spending their winter weekends poolside at swim meets.

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IN THIS ISSUE



For the Public Good: Child Care as Economic Development 4

The State's Essential Infrastructure 7

Why Regulation Matters 8

Partnering with Public Schools for Full-Day Preschool 9

How to Start a Child Care Center 10

A Beautiful Career: What Family Child Care Can Do 12

The Struggle is Real: Finding Child Care in Northwest Kansas 14

The Amazing Resiliency of Child Care Workers 15

Taking Care of Business 16

How to Pay Yourself First 17

Extending Child Care Experiences to the Home 18

What's Your Connection? 19

A New Cohort Model to Support Child Care Workers 20

Provider Appreciation Day 21

Book Nook: Stretching Our Minds Together 22



FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

Child Care As Economic Development



BY DR. BRADFORD WILES

The argument for access to quality, affordable child care has historically been: “It’s for the children!” This is a moral proposition focusing on the benefits to the next generation. While virtually everyone involved in the child care field believes in this moral imperative, we know that this sentiment alone cannot adequately compete in the marketplace of ideas. Thus, we require both a shift in focus and a new approach to sharing the benefits of quality, affordable child care — beyond the well-documented advantages to cognitive and social-emotional development.

As public budgets across the U.S. have tightened and age demographics in local communities have changed, a new and different perspective on the importance of quality, affordable child care has emerged. This perspective views early education and care as drivers of a healthy population and economic growth.

What the Pandemic Taught Us

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected each of us in different ways — draining us, hurting our families and friends, and affecting our collective and individual mental, physical, and emotional health.

No one working during this pandemic can ignore the issue of child care. Take a moment to reflect on how many times you have personally experienced one of the following:

- You or a colleague had to leave a meeting to care for children.
- You or a colleague had children in your meetings because of child care needs.
- You or a colleague lost productivity because of child care needs.
- You or a colleague could not go to work because of child care needs.

How much do you think these situations affected your individual, family, community, and employer's productivity and health?

Problems with child care also affect parents' long-term career prospects and advancement.

The Public Good

The term “public good” can be defined as a commodity or service — provided without the need for profit — to all members of a community. Governments and other organizations make investments for the public good to help their citizens thrive. The interstate highway system, begun in 1956 near Topeka, is a prime example of investing in the public good. While its original purpose was national defense, it resulted in goods moving safely and efficiently across the country. It increased economic productivity and lowered costs. We all benefit from the interstate highway system far beyond the money expended to create and maintain it.

Multiple parallels exist between the interstate highway system and

child care. For one, economic productivity increases when communities and families have access to quality, affordable child care. Consider:

- How many dollars in productivity and absenteeism are lost each day by adults simultaneously trying to care for children and work their full-time jobs?
- How much safer are children in full-time care facilities designed to meet their needs?
- How many more individuals, especially women, can enter the workforce and contribute to the local, state, and national economies while simultaneously supporting their families?

A three-pronged approach, conceived by Mildred Warner of Cornell University, illustrates how child care can be a public good for children, families, and economic development. This model includes:

- The effect of child care on specific places, including local and regional economies
- The effect on primary caregivers, as well as the social infrastructure supporting workers and their employers
- The effect on children in child care settings, including investment in the development and education of the next generation of workers

Next, we dive deeper into the positive economic outcomes that could result from improved access to quality, affordable child care.

Increased Workforce Participation

Access to high-quality care for young children helps parents increase their employment and earnings in the immediate term, often resulting in dual-earner households. Indeed, employment is the most commonly cited reason that parents begin looking for child care. Due to shifting roles, responsibilities, and economic demands, families with young children were joining the workforce in record numbers before the pandemic. Analyses from our own needs assessments in Kansas have indicated both an extreme demand for and dramatic undersupply of child care, which is preventing women from entering or fully participating in the workforce in Kansas communities.

Problems with child care also affect parents' long-term career prospects and advancement. A quarter of parents have reduced their work hours, turned down other job offers, or been prevented from pursuing further education and training. Other effects include parents rejecting promotions, reducing hours from full-time to part-time work, or quitting a job due to insufficient child care.

(Continued on next page)



Reduced Absenteeism and Higher Productivity

Before the pandemic, U.S. businesses lost approximately \$4.4 billion annually due to absent workers dealing with child care breakdowns. A nationally representative survey of parents with children under the age of 3 found that:

- Almost two-thirds of parents facing child care struggles leave work early, and more than half report being distracted at work or missing full days.
- 86% of parents acknowledge that problems with child care have hurt their efforts or time commitment at work.
- 20% report that they have been formally reprimanded.
- 8% have been fired.
- 7% have been demoted or transferred to a less desirable position, limiting their career opportunities.

Problems with child care significantly reduce how much time parents spend at work.

- Parents lost an average of two hours of work per week before the pandemic.
- More than 60% of parents reported having to leave work early.
- 50% reported being late, missing days of work, or being distracted at work due to problems with child care.

Workers have also indicated that child care investments have increased their motivation at work and their commitment to their employers. This lowers turnover, which costs employers an average of 33% of a worker's salary.

Future Workforce Investment

Children entering school at age 5 are just a short 11 years from being able to fully work at age 16. Rural, agricultural economies rely on homegrown workforces even more than urban areas. With the agriculture sector's population aging, rural communities in Kansas are in need of talent and labor to maintain and grow their current workforces. In recent years, real wages for agricultural jobs have risen faster than for the average worker in a nonfarm occupation.

Problems with child care significantly reduce how much time parents spend at work.

Providing quality early education and care to children in these communities will better prepare them to enter the workforce. Such an investment will pay off not just in the near-term, but also in the decades to come.

Job Recruitment and Retention

Access to quality, affordable child care offers profound benefits for employers, as discussed above. Child care resources allow businesses to recruit and retain workers, especially in rural areas where available care is often more limited.

Furthermore, employers often focus on recruiting and retaining workers in their 20s and 30s — at the age when many begin forming families. Millennials in this age group will comprise

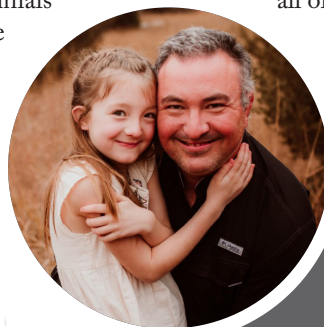
50% of the global workforce next year. The majority of American parents with very young children are now in the workforce; this is true of both single and married parents. In the U.S., approximately 14 million parents have children under the age of 3, and more than 11 million (78%) are working.

The Reasons Shouldn't Matter

Access to quality, affordable child care benefits children, parents, and other primary caregivers, as well as the economies in which we live and work. The pandemic has laid bare how important child care is to productivity, absenteeism, workforce participation, and job retention. In the U.S., we invest in programs that we know will enhance the public good, and we often measure these in economic terms. Although this perspective doesn't describe the full spectrum of benefits, it does provide the most compelling argument for public investment in child care.

Concerning ourselves with the motivations for investment in child care only creates division. We all want to do what's right for the children, and it shouldn't matter how we get there. If a community wants to invest in child care as an economic driver, is that any less noble than doing so for the benefit of children? They both lead to investment in early childhood education, helping us accomplish our shared goal.

We must recognize how important the issue of child care is — not just for parents, but also for those who work alongside parents or live in communities with young children. In other words, it matters to all of us. ●



DR. BRADFORD WILES

Associate Professor/
Extension Specialist,
Kansas State University

Dr. Bradford Wiles focuses on building resilience and health in vulnerable families. Specifically, he uses a collaborative model of applied developmental research and outreach, tailoring his efforts to providing rural, low-income, ethnically and racially diverse families with the knowledge, skills, and decision-making strategies they need to change their lives. His research focuses on access to quality, affordable child care and building resilience in rural, low-income families.





New Legislation: Employer Child Care Tax Credit

Kansas already allows C-corporations and privilege tax payers (essentially, financial institutions) to receive a credit for helping their employees find and pay for child care. Unfortunately, the credit has been vastly underutilized in recent years, with only around \$100,000 of the \$3 million allocated for the credit being claimed. New legislation would allow all businesses to claim a credit for providing on-site care, paying for off-site care, assisting with the search for child care, or paying into a shared services system.

That last item may be unfamiliar to many, as it would be new to the state of Kansas. A shared services model allows businesses that want to provide child care — but don't want to get into the business of running a child care facility — to work with an outside entity to assist with administration, recruitment, and daily operations. By creating a financial incentive, the tax credit will help establish this innovative approach to addressing Kansas' child care needs.

The State's Essential Infrastructure

BY MITCH RUCKER

Both child care providers and parents face a daunting challenge in the state of Kansas. Our child care system needs significant investment, and the market can't fix the problem.

Here's the challenge, one likely familiar to many reading this magazine. If providers increase their prices, families won't be able to afford care. If families can't afford care, that means caregivers won't be able to work or support their families.

At the same time, the costs of running a child care business are rising, meaning providers only earn minimum wage or slightly more. Thus, fewer and fewer people enter the early learning field, and more providers close down.

Meanwhile, children are left without access to high-quality child care and the lifelong benefits associated with it. We can see the problems all around us. So how do we begin to fix them?

Perhaps a change of perspective is in order. Let's think of child care like our state's physical infrastructure — like the roads and bridges we all depend on to get from one place to another.

Clearly, Kansas has a vested interest in providing residents with the basics they need to work and live. That's why we pay taxes to keep our roads paved and bridges safe. That's why our nation built the interstate highway system (championed by Kansas' own President Eisenhower) starting in the 1950s.

And that's why Kansas needs to support child care. The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare many truths that might have been hidden from view before, and one of those is how very essential child care is for all of us. That word, "essential," isn't just my description, but an official designation by the state.

Early learning is one the building blocks of our society.

Most households require two incomes these days, meaning that someone other than the parents must help care for a family's children. Kansas is also experiencing troubling population loss, especially in our rural areas, and we don't want to force people to choose between working and starting a family.

To support this essential infrastructure, we need help from the state. That means tax credits that could help businesses contribute to the cost of child care for their employees. That means enhanced reimbursement rates for providers and grants to help them sustain and improve their businesses. That means prioritizing child care the way we do other essential infrastructure projects throughout Kansas.

No, it won't be easy. It won't be quick. But the sooner we get to work, the sooner we will have a stable and thriving early learning sector — for the good of all Kansans. ●



MITCH RUCKER

Early Learning Policy
Advisor, Kansas Action
for Children

Mitch Rucker previously served as the Legislative Director for the Kansas House Majority Leader and has worked on congressional campaigns in Kansas.

WHY REGULATION MATTERS

BY LORI KRAVITCZ

Decades of science and research tell us that the early years are critical to child development. Children are most likely to thrive in healthy and safe environments that provide positive interactions with nurturing adults. As a program, we stand firm in our belief that good beginnings last a lifetime. We also believe that licensed child care providers are essential to a strong start for every child.

In 1919, Kansas passed the Child Care Act, requiring the licensure of programs providing child care services. With this action, the state acknowledged its responsibility to protect the health, safety, and well-being of children in out-of-home care. Pursuant to Kansas law, K.S.A. 65-501, an individual must be licensed with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) to provide care for unrelated children away from their own home.

The purpose of child care regulation is to reduce predictable or preventable harm to children in out-of-home settings. The regulation of child care facilities provides a basic level of protection for all children.

The purpose of child care regulation is to reduce predictable or preventable harm to children in out-of-home settings.

Effective public regulation also provides basic consumer protection. Parents and guardians know that a licensed child care facility received an initial inspection and was compliant with health and safety laws and regulations. Facility licensing information and compliance history — including inspection findings, complaint investigations, and enforcement actions — are publicly available on the KDHE website. These tools and resources allow parents and guardians to make informed choices when selecting child care.

KDHE Child Care Licensing laws and regulations are foundational to health and safety. Regulations vary by facility or program type and define requirements for:

- Staffing, such as background checks, education, and initial and ongoing training

- Inside and outside environments
- Health records for children and staff
- Staff-to-child ratios and capacity for enrollment
- Child care practices, such as safe sleep, meals, supervision, napping, and discipline
- Emergency plans
- Reporting of critical incidents

Additional regulations that support the health and development of children are specific to the use of space, program planning, daily activities/routines, and more. Each regulation serves a purpose in defining the intent of child care laws.

As the KDHE Child Care Licensing Program Director, I recognize there is a need to effectively balance our authority and regulatory responsibilities with the realities of the licensed child care community. Therefore, we strive to enforce child care laws and regulations based on the purpose of the program, partnering with providers to strengthen opportunities to support young children and families. We continually assess our policies to ensure that we uphold the law without imposing unnecessary barriers to success.

More information about Kansas child care licensing is available at kdheks.gov/bcclr. ●



LORI KRAVITCZ

Director, Early Care & Youth Programs Section, KDHE

Lori Kravitz is the director of the Early Care & Youth Programs Section within the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, which includes the Child Care Licensing Program. She began working with the program in 2010 and has been the program director since 2012.



Partnering with Public Schools for Full-Day Preschool

BY CORNELIA STEVENS

Research indicates that children who attend full-day, high-quality preschool show larger gains in literacy, numeracy, social-emotional development, and physical development compared to those who attend half-day preschool. In addition, many parents benefit from the full-day option because it aligns better with their work schedules. However, funding such a model can be quite the challenge for licensed child care facilities, and public-school buildings do not always have the capacity to house full-day preschool classrooms.

TOP Early Learning Centers has been providing full-day/full-year early childhood education since 2003. Our model includes:

- Low student-teacher ratios
- Research- and evidenced-based curriculum
- STEAM education
- Parent engagement
- Case management
- Social-emotional support
- Classroom consultation
- Full nutrition services
- Literacy remediation

Eighty-five percent of TOP graduates enter kindergarten ready to learn. Results from our Longitudinal Study show that TOP graduates are performing better than their peers in reading and math state assessment tests, attendance, behavior, and the need for special education.

For over 15 years, TOP has partnered with Wichita and Derby Public Schools to provide full-day programming. Students

enrolled in either USD 259 or USD 260 are placed in one of our nine classrooms. All our teachers have an early childhood or elementary education teaching license. We use the same pre-K curriculum as both Wichita and Derby Public Schools, so there is a seamless transition for the children enrolled at TOP.

This public-private partnership provides both the school districts and TOP with the opportunity to expand access to full-day early childhood education, while providing at-risk children the opportunity to receive the academic, developmental, and social-emotional support they need to prepare for kindergarten.

The success of our long-term partnership can be attributed to ongoing trust, communication, the quality of care, and student performance. It is a shining example that, when partners think outside the box, everybody wins. ●



CORNELIA STEVENS

Executive Director, TOP Early Learning Centers

Cornelia Stevens has more than 20 years of experience developing collaborative partnerships, creating opportunities for new business development, assessing and identifying needed services, developing programs, and monitoring the quality and effectiveness of programs and services. Much of her professional career has focused on early childhood programming. Cornelia earned a bachelor's degree in Music Therapy from Ohio University and a master's in Business Administration from Baker University.

How To Start a Child Care Center



BY TAMISHA SEWELL

Starting a new child care center can seem daunting without a clearly defined path to follow. However, finding the right people and the right resources from the beginning can make the journey easier.

Start looking at the numbers early to give you an idea of what your overhead might be. First, list out potential costs. Then estimate how many children you will need to enroll at your center to be profitable. There will always be unexpected costs, so plan for more funding (at least 20%) and capacity than you think you will need.

After you have your estimate, start looking for buildings for your child care business. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) child care regulation books include detailed information on how many square feet you need per child, as well as child-to-teacher ratios. You'll also need to contact the Office of the State Fire Marshal to get more specific details on required sprinkler systems. This can be a big expense, so it's important to talk to them early in the process.

One critical step when starting any business is creating a business plan.

One critical step when starting any business is creating a business plan. This will become the road map for your business and will be necessary to apply for funding. Before you start, consider taking an online class about writing business plans. The Small Business Administration offers these classes regularly. Also read articles and look at completed business plans to get an idea of what to include. Just take it one step at a time.

Next, contact local services and groups that can help you learn more about the business planning and funding process. The best place to start is your city and/or county offices. Many communities are a part of the NetWork Kansas E-Communities program, which is a great informational resource for

small business owners, as well as a potential funding source. You can usually find these and other resources by searching online for "economic development" in your area. Your local Chamber of Commerce should also be able to help you find resources, as well as your local library.

You will need other people on your team, including your contractor, a realtor, and a loan specialist.

You will need other people on your team, including your contractor, a realtor, and a loan specialist. Start by asking your network for recommendations, and check with your Chamber of Commerce and Better Business Bureau. You'll also want to be in contact with your local child care licensor throughout the process. (Find their information on the KDHE website.) They will set you up with the necessary training, paperwork, and other requirements.

Starting your own child care center is quite a journey. But if you're passionate about the idea, the work is worth it. Hopefully these tips and the accompanying resource list will get you started down the right track. ●



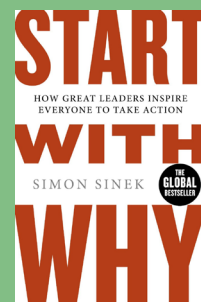
TAMISHA SEWELL

Owner/Director,
The Tree House of Early
Learning Center

Tamisha Sewell has 12 years of experience in the early childhood field. She is the chair of the Kansas Children's Service League's local CDLC. She is an early childhood education advocate and looks forward to bringing more child care to rural Kansas. Contact her at tamishad@gmail.com.

Suggested Books & Resources

- "Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone To Take Action" by Simon Sinek



- "The Slight Edge" by Jeff Olson
- "Relationship Roadmap: Real-World Strategies for Building a Positive, Collaborative Culture in Your Preschool" by Sindye Alexander
- Small Business Administration sba.gov
- Office of the State Fire Marshal firemarshal.ks.gov
- Links to Quality ksqualitynetwork.org/links
- KDHE Child Care Licensing kdheks.gov/bcclr
- NetWork Kansas E-Communities networkkansas.com/ecommunities
- The Child Care Success Company (Great podcasts and blogs) childcaresuccess.com
- U.S. Child Care Deserts (Check child care scarcity in your area) childcaresuccess.com



A Beautiful Career:

**WHAT FAMILY
CHILD CARE
CAN DO**

BY EMILY BARNES

After my second child, postpartum anxiety started interfering with my ability to work. Thoughts swirled around my head: What would happen if I stepped away from my job to take care of myself and my family? Would I lose out on professional growth? Would I ever be able to get a “real job” again? Would I still be able to earn what I was worth?

Despite the fact that my world felt so scary, one constant was my ability to take care of others. I’d provided support to people with varying abilities for over a decade. I’d also taught in a Montessori preschool. I had the knowledge I needed. Was it time to take a leap of faith?

In 2013, I opened my own family child care. The journey was much more intense, and much more beautiful, than I ever could have imagined.

Through trial and error, I learned to focus on the unique benefits offered by family child care. You won’t find circle time in my program, but you will find organic learning opportunities in every square inch of my home. Structured activities fall flat with the kids, but we thrive outside. Play-based learning replaced Letters of the Week. The weekly ritual of watching the trash truck sends toddlers running to the front porch to offer applause, cheers, and calls for the horn.

I found that strict schedules lead to stress, but enjoying the moment brings laughter. Our only non-negotiables are meal times and naps. My program focuses on social and emotional learning, as well as practical life skills. I teach compassion and care for others. When I worry less about their academic performance and focus instead on our connections to one another, the children improve all their skills. They end up developing a compassionate heart and an eagerness to learn.

**But this beautiful,
intricate opportunity
comes with a price.**

As a family child care provider, I can connect with parents on a deeper level. We discuss their child’s needs, as well as their development. Knowing how scared I was when I became a mother helps me open up conversation with new parents.

But this beautiful, intricate opportunity comes with a price. Providing care can be hard. I lose sleep when the children

struggle. I work longer hours than the parents who pay me. I feel guilty when I need to close, even to go to the doctor. When enrollment dropped in the past, it meant the difference between paying bills and buying Christmas presents for my kids.

As with all small businesses, I’ve seen mine ebb and flow. A few years ago, I expanded my license and grew. I learned about staffing and taxes. We were finally able to buy a new house! Then, after pushing my business to grow for a while, I saw signs that it was time to pull back. My assistant moved out of state. I decided to shift gears and operate alone again.

I questioned the decision at the time. But six months later, the pandemic began. Temporarily, some families stayed home, but I remained open. We connected through social media and video chats. As the world fell apart, my families still needed care. Within a few weeks, they returned. My smaller crew allows me to participate in advocacy efforts to educate the public about the value providers offer.

This job is still hard, but my career is beautiful. Many days, I find myself fighting provider fatigue. Yet I see what family child care can do. For as long as I have more to give, I’m here to give it. ●



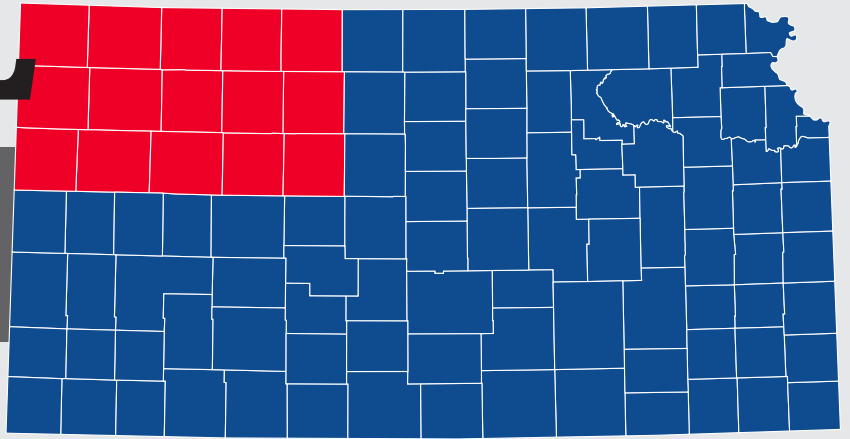
EMILY BARNES

Owner/Manager,
Barnes Childcare

Emily Barnes has a B.S. in Human Development and Learning with an emphasis in Special Education and French. Her background includes supporting people with developmental disabilities using applied behavior analysis. She operates her family child care in Olathe, Kan., and has joined efforts to advocate for providers.

THE STRUGGLE IS REAL

FINDING CHILD CARE IN NORTHWEST KANSAS



BY MISHAELA BENSON

The day we announced we were expecting, people had a lot to tell me. Words of congratulations, excitement, and joy, as well as bits of advice from experienced parents. Some of the advice was helpful (“find a schedule and stick to it”), and some of it was painfully accurate (“give up on a full night of sleep for the next 18 years”). But one particular piece of advice stood out above the rest.

“Get on a child care list now, so that you can get in by the time the baby is born!”

That seemed like an odd thing to be worrying about so early in the pregnancy, but we heard it quite often. Could finding quality child care really be that hard? As it turns out, it actually was.

We don't talk enough about the difficulty of finding quality child care in northwest Kansas.

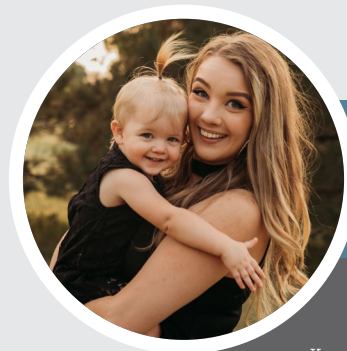
The child care providers that we liked were at capacity, with years-long waiting lists, and the available providers left us feeling anxious and uneasy about leaving our newborn there all day. As first-time parents, we were forced to make the difficult decision between quality and availability, a choice that no parent should have to make.

I was fortunate to finally find a quality child care provider that fit my family's needs, but this herculean task took me two years and two child care providers to accomplish. Our provider is an irreplaceable asset in my family's life. To find someone who loves, nurtures, and cares for your child like their own is a gift that can never be repaid.

We don't talk enough about the difficulty of finding quality child care in northwest Kansas. The child care crisis in our small part of the world is very real, and it affects new parents every single day. Getting the best possible care for a child should not require sacrifice. It should be a guarantee.

Bringing new life into this world is an absolute miracle. Expecting parents should not be forced to make a difficult decision during a time that is supposed to be filled with love, joy, and excitement. Every single parent deserves peace of mind when it comes to the safety and well-being of their child. And future parents should not find themselves in the same predicament that we did.

Quality child care is a necessity in every community, and the lack of it here in northwest Kansas must be addressed. By bringing this issue to light, I hope we can unite communities around struggling families and hardworking providers to inspire more support and find real solutions that work for everyone. ●



MISHAELA BENSON

Kansas Department of Children & Families

Mishaela Benson, a northwest Kansas native, works for the Kansas Department of Children and Families. She enjoys spending time with her daughter, traveling, and reading.

The Amazing Resiliency of Child Care Providers



BY THE CHILD CARE HEALTH CONSULTATION TEAM, CHILD CARE AWARE® OF KANSAS

It's hard to believe that over a year has passed since the world as we knew it came to a screeching halt, only to be flipped upside down.

Child care providers, who have always been terribly underappreciated, became frontline heroes of the pandemic. Finally, our state and our nation recognized their immense value, at a time when working parents needed them like never before.

As Child Care Health Consultants, we have been privy to firsthand accounts of how these community heroes managed to survive against nearly impossible odds.

Child care providers... became frontline heroes of the pandemic.

Many providers managed to secure local and federal grants to fund personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning supplies, duplicate toys, and whatever else they needed to implement proper social distancing and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Providers sprang into action to implement policy improvements and new

protocols related to child and employee attendance, drop-off and pickup routines, and makeshift health-check stations for children, employees, and visitors. To keep parents in the loop, providers scrambled to put together activity kits with art supplies, paper, educational materials, and snacks — allowing parents to stay engaged in what was going on in their child's classroom or early learning environment.

As we continue to acclimate to drastic change during this global pandemic, we would be remiss not to recognize the amazing resilience of child care providers — and their determination to keep their doors open so that children have access to a healthy, loving environment amid the chaos. ●



Book Your Child Care Health Consultation!

High-quality Child Care Health Consultations are available to help child care providers identify ways to enhance health, safety, and wellness in their programs.

Providers will receive consultation services from a designated consultant in their public health region. The role of the Child Care Health Consultant is to promote the health and development of children, families, and staff and to ensure a healthy and safe child care environment.

Licensed child care providers may request consultation services at cchc@ks.childcareaware.org or at ks.childcareaware.org.

Taking care of children is only half your job. The other half is **taking care of your business.**

Many providers end up quitting because they can't make enough money, despite their passion for children.

Taking Care of Business:

Tips for Family Child Care Providers

BY TOM COPELAND

Family child care providers start their businesses because they love children and want to care for them. But many providers quit because they can't make enough money. Taking care of children is only half your job. The other half is taking care of your business.

The most important thing you do is to provide quality care for children. With a good business foundation, you'll be able to continue doing this work for a longer period of time. It will enable you to support your family, perhaps retire earlier, or spend more time with children.

When you think about the business side of family child care, start by asking yourself this question: **"What do you want from your work this year?"**

Your answers might be:

- More money
- More paid or unpaid time off
- Recruiting more children
- Saving for retirement
- Reducing your stress
- Having fewer conflicts with parents

To get what you want, you first have to identify it. It's not selfish to focus on what you want as a business. You care for your spouse, your own children, the children in your care, and maybe even your parents. It's time to care for yourself.

Are you sacrificing too much for others? Maybe. If you are giving all your time and money to others and not saving for yourself,

then it's time to rethink your strategy. If you think there is no money to save for yourself, maybe it's time to rethink how you run your business. If you haven't raised your rates in three years, it may be time to do so now. If you don't think you can make more money at what you are doing, maybe it's time to think about taking on another job.

Set Your Goals

It's never too late in the year to set goals. What aspects of your business do you want to improve this year? Create a list. It might include: Raise rates, reduce expenses, enforce late pickup fees, implement two marketing strategies, get business liability insurance, and so on. Pick one or two priorities, and measure how well you did at the end of the year. Reset new goals each year.

You Can Do It

There is nothing about the business side of family child care that you can't manage. You may need some help — tax preparer, insurance agent, or advice from other providers. But you were smart enough to start your own business. You manage multiple tasks: chef, activity manager, conflict mediator, finance officer, and more.

In the end, how you run your business is up to you. There are no strict rules. In my opinion, however, the stress associated with being a family child care provider is often caused by the lack of attention paid to the business side of what you do. ●





How to Pay Yourself First

Money Management for Family Child Care Providers

BY TOM COPELAND

Most family child care providers know they should be saving more money for their retirement. At the end of the month, though, there is usually little, if anything, left for savings. You've spent your money on other things and left out any savings for retirement.

Here's the first step you should take to gain more control over your money: Track the money you spend for one month. Put the expenses into two categories: fixed expenses and flexible expenses.

Fixed expenses are those items that you have little or no control over. They may include: mortgage/rent payments, utilities, taxes, food, credit card payments, car loan payments, etc.

Flexible expenses are those that you do have some control over. They can include: clothing, entertainment, charitable contributions, child care business expenses, and so on.

At the end of the month, review where you spent your money, and ask yourself these questions:

- **Is my spending level sustainable?**
If your monthly expenses exceed your monthly income, this is a clear sign that your finances need immediate attention. You won't be able to continue down this path without going into debt.

- **What fixed expenses might you reduce?** Credit card interest and car loan interest are the first place to look. Your goal should be to pay off all credit card debt at the end of each month and start a car replacement fund so you can eventually pay cash for a car.
- **Are my values in line with my spending?** If your spending behavior doesn't match your true priorities in life, you may want to become more purposeful about how you are using your resources. This can be a powerful motivation for changing your spending habits.

The best way to save money for retirement is to make it a high priority. This means setting a modest monthly savings goal, like \$25 or \$100, and depositing this amount in a savings account or individual retirement account (IRA) at the beginning of each month. This is called paying yourself first.

If you start running out of money before the end of the month, cut your flexible expenses. It should be fairly easy to cut something, such as eating out, clothing, entertainment, etc. Providers

who do this exercise don't miss the money they didn't spend.

Now you are on the road to saving for your retirement. Small amounts add up. If you save \$100 a month and it earns 8% a year, you will have over \$19,000 at the end of 10 years!

For more tips and ideas, check out Tom's blog at tomcopelandblog.com.



TOM COPELAND

Trainer, Author and Advocate for Family Child Care

Tom Copeland has been the nation's leading trainer, author, and advocate for the business of family child care since 1981. The author of nine books, Tom has presented hundreds of business workshops for family child care providers across the country. Tom earned a law degree from William Mitchell College of Law and served as director of the Redleaf National Institute for 15 years. He lives in St. Paul, Minn., with his wife Diane and two cats, Duke and Ella.

Tom answers thousands of calls and emails each year to help providers, tax professionals, and trainers understand complex business and tax issues. Contact him on Facebook, by phone at 651-280-5991, or at tomcopeland@live.com.

Extending Child Care Experiences to the Home

BY CHILD CARE AWARE® OF KANSAS STAFF

Discussing child care experiences at home strengthens kids' brain connections. Their social and emotional development is enhanced when parents and caregivers expand on kids' experiences by asking questions, using a variety of words, and naming feelings and emotions.

Parents and caregivers can use these tips to connect child care experiences to life at home:

- Allow extra time for drop-off or pickup to talk about your child's day. This will help build and expand on the conversations that occurred at child care.
- Teach communication skills by being a good listener. Allow your child to practice back-and-forth interactions on the ride home.
- Encourage your child to think about the questions more and give longer answers. Avoid "yes" or "no" questions. For example: "Tomorrow you're playing outside. What do you think you will see?"
- Pay attention to what your child is saying, talking as you would to a friend.
- Be sure to schedule technology-free time.

Since brain development and skill-building does not stop when children leave child care, you can keep the interest going at home by talking with your children about their day!

Visit [ks.childcareaware.org](https://www.ks.childcareaware.org) for more tips!





What's Your CONNECTION?

BY RACHELLE SODEN

Connections matter in early childhood. Early care and education professionals — including child care providers, preschool teachers, and alternative caregivers — shape the future for our children, our community, and our nation. Their work is tremendously important, given that early childhood experiences influence our brains, our health, and our chance to learn and succeed later in life. The key to healthy brain development is healthy relationships.

When a child experiences powerful stress without the support of a warm, caring adult — especially if that stress happens often or lasts a long time — it can become toxic, affecting their development and lifelong health. Fortunately, the presence of a caring adult can help mitigate negative effects and teach coping skills and resiliency. Positive and secure relationships with alternative caregivers, like child care providers and preschool teachers, can protect against trauma, promote good behaviors, and improve lifelong health. Connections really do matter!

Connections Matter

The Connections Matter Kansas project is administered by Prevent Child Abuse Kansas at the Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL), whose mission is to protect and promote the well-being

of children. KCSL uses evidence-based programming in the areas of health, safety, and education to help children and families succeed and break cycles of neglect, abuse and trauma. These programs help both children and parents develop skills for success in their families, schools, and workplaces. KCSL recently received funding through the All in for Kansas Kids Quality Subgrants, which focus on developing and implementing new approaches to help children and families thrive. This funding is being used to launch the Connections Matter training curriculum.

Connections Matter is designed to engage early care and education professionals, parents, caregivers, and community members in building caring connections to improve well-being. Greater social connectedness strengthens families and reduces the likelihood that child abuse will occur.

Connections Matter workshops offer easily digestible information on:

- Current brain science research
- The implications of toxic stress on brain development, learning, and behavior

- The importance of supportive, trusting relationships in mitigating the impact of trauma and fostering the development of resiliency
- Resources for implementing trauma-informed practices

The Connections Matter training will soon be available for early care and education professionals. If you would like to schedule a training for your group or region or be added to the training notification list, please contact Rachelle at rsoden@kcsl.org or visit connectionsmatter.org/kansas. ●



RACHELLE SODEN

Training Manager,
Kansas Children's
Service League

Rachelle Soden is the Training Manager at the Kansas Children's Service League, the state chapter for Prevent Child Abuse America. She has been providing child abuse prevention education to Kansas communities for more than 20 years.

A New Cohort Model to Support Child Care Providers



BY BERNI HOWE

We knew this already, but now it's been officially confirmed: Kansas has gaps in access to training and support for child care providers, as well as gaps in access to high-quality care for families. These findings from a statewide needs assessment were published by the Kansas Early Childhood Systems Building team in late 2020.

At Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO), we know that supported child care providers are more satisfied in their roles, stay in business longer, and provide a higher quality of care, often leading to more slots for families. In order to offer more support to providers, we are excited to offer two long-term cohort options for child care providers in frontier, rural, and densely-settled rural counties. We define "cohort" as a group of individuals participating in professional development with ongoing support for more than three months. Cohort participants benefit from a combination of high-quality training, technical assistance support from a KCCTO facilitator, and peer support.

The first option is a **Regional Cohort**, which uses targeted geographical recruitment to connect providers with others in their area of the state. The goal is to increase both facilitated and peer group support in areas where they aren't always readily available, due to the distance between programs or local infrastructure. We are excited to partner with K-State Research and Extension agents across the state to provide greater access to both local and state-level support.

Another option, the **New Provider Cohort**, is targeted toward newly licensed family child care providers (FCC), defined as Day Care Homes or Group Day Care Homes licensed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment within the past 24 months. The number of FCC programs in the state far exceeds the number of child care centers, and these programs face unique challenges, such as sharing space between the business and the family and dealing

with feelings of isolation. The goal of this cohort option is to help FCC providers build a successful business and minimize provider burnout.

The cohort model's overarching goal is to support as many child care providers as possible in ways that truly meet the needs of the workforce and the families they serve. Providers or stakeholders with questions about the cohort model or participant eligibility should contact her at bernihowe@ksu.edu or 800-227-3578. ●



BERNI HOWE

Lead Training & Technical Assistance Specialist, KCCTO

Berni Howe has worked in the early childhood field for nearly 20 years in many capacities, including providing direct care to children, administration, advocacy, coaching, and training. In addition to her work with KCCTO, Berni is the board president of the Kansas Association for the Education of Young Children (KSAEYC).

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PROVIDER APPRECIATION DAY

MAY 7, 2021

BY KELLY CAIN-SWART

It's time to celebrate the dedication and compassion of all those who tirelessly work every day planting seeds of love in the hearts and minds of young children!

SHOW A CHILD CARE PROVIDER YOUR APPRECIATION FOR ALL THEY DO:

- Remember coupon books? Create your own "Thank You Coupon." Ideas include: volunteering to read a book at story time or providing an extra pair of hands during a science activity.
- Attach a note of appreciation to donated art supplies. Find out ahead of time what supplies are running low or used most often. Most providers could use a new set of crayons, markers, watercolors, colored pencils, and chalk.
- Attach a heartfelt thank you to a heart-healthy snack.

- Organize a book drive for new and gently used books to add to the provider's collection.
- Nominate a provider — someone you think should be recognized for their tireless efforts to provide care for children of working parents — for Provider of the Month at providerappreciationday.org.
- For more ideas, visit our Child Care Appreciation Pinterest Board at pinterest.com/ccaofkansas/child-care-provider-appreciation.



KELLY CAIN-SWART

Community Consultant,
Child Care Aware®
of Kansas

Kelly Cain-Swart's career in early childhood started right at home with five children and has continued for more than 30 years of working to improve the lives of children, families, and child care professionals.



Stretching Our Minds Together

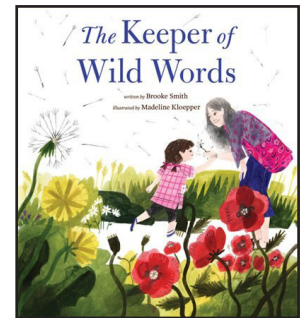
BY ALICE EBERHART-WRIGHT



Ready! Set! Go! Change is happening all around us, especially in education. It's our responsibility as teachers to help

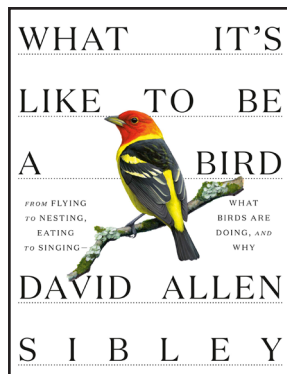
children adjust to all the changes they'll experience in our fast-moving society. That means stretching their minds with new concepts, vocabulary, and information. Books can help us do that.

identification games with older children, and flip through the book to answer questions and throw out interesting facts. I'm definitely getting my own copy and may buy more for family members with young kids.



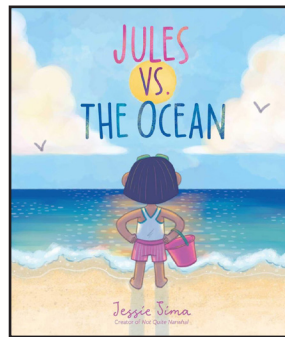
The other recommended nature book for younger children is “**The Keeper of Wild Words**” by Brooke Smith. It was written to expand the vocabularies of children between the ages of 5 and 8 to include more nature-related words.

Finally, because we've had a year of reckoning with racism, I once again suggest that you check out books that wrap you and your children in diversity — different races, different cultures, different languages, different abilities, and different types of families. Then read, read, read! ●



I recently picked up the latest issue of Nature Conservancy Magazine and was thrilled to see a page on nature-focused children's books. “**What It's Like To Be a Bird**” by David Allen Sibley is a book for adults that can be used regularly with children of every age. The book is an investment at \$36, but it's worth every penny. Birds are some of the first creatures in nature that capture our attention. Did you know that a bird eats the equivalent of 25 pizzas every day or that crows can identify individual people?

This book is magnificently illustrated with large pictures that even babies would enjoy. As spring unfolds, we can watch birds out the window with little ones, play



I asked my local library about two of the books mentioned in Nature Conservancy. They had “**Jules vs. the Ocean**” by Jessie Sima, and I immediately picked it up through curbside service. It includes a miniature audio-reader on the cover that allows children to read this very simple book alone. Kids can learn to turn it on, manage the volume and headphones, and turn the page at the sound of a sand castle being knocked over by a wave. I wasn't familiar with VOX™ Books — the device that turns print books into audio books — but apparently schools and libraries love them. Maybe you will too.

At first, I thought “Jules” wasn't a book for kids in landlocked Kansas, but then I reconsidered. Children travel. Children watch TV. Creative teachers could use props to replicate what happens when a wave hits a sand castle. The book fits well into the STEAM curriculum. And it was a wonderful adventure for me on a cold winter day in the midst of a pandemic.



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- **Supports child care advocacy work in Kansas**
The information collected by Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies paints a picture about how funding and support can positively impact Kansas children and providers. Comprehensive reports spotlight challenges experienced by hardworking child care professionals.

Log into your account at **ks.childcareaware.org** to update your information today!



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