

A publication of **Child Care Aware®** of Kansas

# Kansas **child**

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Closing the Child  
Care Gap

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# CLOSING THE CHILD CARE GAP: RECRUITING & RETAINING CHILD CARE PROVIDERS



I'd be willing to wager that any working family with young children can tell you exactly how difficult it is to find child care right now. It's even harder to find care during nontraditional hours, such as nights or weekends, or specialized training for children with health or social-emotional needs.

Across the state, Kansas communities are cobbling together a patchwork of public and private solutions to expand the supply of child care. The common denominator for every community plan seems to center on workforce challenges.

Caring for and teaching young children is arguably the most important and foundational work of any society, but it's not often valued as such. In 2019, according to the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, the median wage for Kansas child care workers was \$10.20 per hour, or about \$21,200 per year. This undercompensation — coupled with the labor shortage currently impacting all sectors of the economy — leaves child care programs struggling to attract and retain qualified staff.

The child care industry — as it's currently structured — simply can't compete with other industries that can afford to pay more. Short-term pandemic

relief funds offer us the opportunity to temporarily increase compensation, but this is a challenging proposition for child care businesses when long-term solutions aren't yet in sight.

Ultimately, our communities are losing child care programs at a steady pace year over year. To reverse this trend, we must rethink what it means to be an early care and education professional. Collectively, what value do we place on this work? How is this profession recognized, honored, and compensated?

Answering these questions requires thought and care. It's not enough to simply change the ratios of children to adults — or to relax our expectations for the training and preparation of early care and education professionals. Ninety percent of young children's brain development occurs before the age of five; we stand to collectively benefit — as parents, employers, and communities — from employing the best and brightest in our early care and education environments. We also benefit from ensuring that all young children have access to high-quality

care, regardless of where they live or their parents' incomes.

In the issue that follows, you'll hear from experts from across the state and nation about the latest strategies to build a robust early care and education workforce. We're at a crossroads with our child care system; we must act now if we hope to raise young Kansans who are ready to succeed in school and in life. ●



**KELLY DAVYDOV**

Executive Director,  
Child Care Aware® of Kansas

Kelly Davydov joined Child Care Aware® 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, 13, and Henry, 11) have made Kansas City their new home. Together, they enjoy exploring state and national parks and farmers markets and spending their winter weekends poolside at swim meets.

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# Get Support and a Stipend to Start a Child Care Business



**BY JESSICA SOTO-BOTELLO**

Have you ever dreamed of starting your own business? Do you have a passion for working with young children? If you answered yes to both those questions, you may want to consider launching your own child care business. And Child Care Aware® of Kansas can help!

Being a child care provider is one of the most rewarding jobs anyone could have. You spend your life caring for little ones, watching them grow as they go on to become successful in school and life. Plus, you get to be your own boss!

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**Being a child care provider is one of the most rewarding jobs anyone could have.**

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But you might still be hesitant about the idea. Everyone knows that getting a business up and running can be challenging and expensive — not to mention a bit risky. You may worry about the money you'll need to invest in the business, or how you'll navigate the licensing and regulations required.

Fortunately, Child Care Aware of Kansas has recognized these challenges. With Kansas communities facing child care shortages — hurting both families and employers — new providers are needed now more than ever. With help from our funders, Child Care Aware of Kansas has partnered with our regional Child Care Resource & Referral agencies to expand the Child Care Health Consultant Network and launch a new program to support new providers during the start-up process.

Child Care Health Consultants are deployed across the state to support those interested in joining the early childhood field. We guide new providers step-by-step through the start-up and licensing process. We are here to provide resources, offer support, and help new child care providers and business owners overcome barriers.

The Child Care Health Consultant Network focuses on promoting health, safety, and wellness in child care programs. We listen to the challenges providers are facing and work as a team to help them find solutions.

The best part is that our program offers a start-up stipend to cover initial expenses. That means you don't need a fortune saved up to launch your business and achieve your dream.

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**Our program offers a start-up stipend to cover initial expenses.**

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Our Health Consultants are excited about this work, and we want to be here for you! Our goal at Child Care Aware of Kansas is to value and support quality early childhood education and provide statewide leadership that builds a diverse, high-quality child care system. This is our vision and mission, and we want to work alongside you to make it happen.

We live in a country and a state that has encouraged us to dream big. Don't let this opportunity pass you by. Now is the time to become a child care provider and small business owner! ●



**JESSICA SOTO-BOTELLO**

Strategic Partnerships Manager,  
Child Care Aware® of Kansas

Jessica resides in Garden City, Kansas. She graduated from Fort Hays State University with a bachelor's in general studies with an emphasis in social services. Her passion has always been helping others and being a helping hand in moments of need.

# An Innovative Grant/Loan Hybrid to Attract New Providers



**BY KELLY GOURLEY**

Like so many other communities across the state, Lincoln County has seen a worrying decrease in child care availability over the past several years. During the summer of 2021, we lost another provider, leaving only two licensed in-home providers with a total capacity of 21 — in a county with a potential demand for 156 slots.

Although the Lincoln County Economic Development Foundation (LCEDF) had been calling attention to the issue and researching potential solutions for years, the strain that the shortage was having on our local businesses and economy required a much more proactive approach. Because the costs and complexities of opening a child care center are so burdensome, the LCEDF decided to incentivize community members to start up new in-home facilities.

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One of our first challenges was figuring out how to provide upfront funding to a new provider while ensuring that they followed through with their plans and stayed open for at least a few years. We worried that, using a traditional upfront grant, the provider might quit after six months — thus wasting our investment. We needed a program that would not only add openings, but also provide stability to child care in our community.

With these considerations in mind, the LCEDF crafted a new \$5,000 Childcare Startup Grant program, a unique quasi-grant/loan hybrid. Working with local banks, the \$5,000 is offered as a traditional loan to the new provider. As long as the provider operates a child care facility over a five-year period, they are not required to make any payments on the loan. Rather, the LCEDF will make annual payments covering both the principal and the interest on the loan.

After five years, the LCEDF will have paid off the loan. In essence, the \$5,000 will have been converted into a grant.

On the other hand, should the provider quit after a few years, they would become responsible for paying off the remaining balance on the loan.

On top of this initial \$5,000, the Dane G. Hansen Foundation has offered additional grant funding to the LCEDF to sweeten the deal. To create a sense of urgency, the LCEDF used the DGH funding to offer another \$3,000 to any new provider that opened by the end of 2021 — which meant providers could take advantage of a total \$8,000 in incentives. This additional \$3,000 grant would be fully paid to the provider upon permanent licensure of their child care facility.

We're happy to report that the program has generated immediate results. Two new in-home child care facilities opened in January, doubling the county's number of licensed providers.

Although the facilities didn't open by the end of the year, the delays were due to state processing times and COVID-related illnesses and quarantines. Knowing that the new providers were working as hard and as fast as they could, the LCEDF granted a deadline extension so that they could receive the assistance they needed.

Due to the success of the program thus far — and the need for yet more child care slots — the LCEDF has extended the offer of \$8,000 in funding to any new providers that open within the county by July 1, 2022.

For full program details or to download an application, visit [livelincolncounty.com/childcare-startup-grant](https://www.livelincolncounty.com/childcare-startup-grant). ●



**KELLY GOURLEY**

Executive Director,  
Lincoln County Economic  
Development Foundation

As executive director, Kelly works with businesses, local governments, nonprofits, and key stakeholders to develop and implement strategies to further community and economic development efforts. She also serves on the board of directors for the Western Kansas Rural Economic Development Alliance and the North Central Regional Planning Commission.



# Opening a Child Care Facility

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) administers the child care licensing laws and issues licenses for child care facilities. The main purpose of child care regulation is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of children receiving care outside their homes.

KDHE contracts with health departments to provide child care regulatory services at the local level. According to Kansas law, regulation is required for anyone caring for one (or more) unrelated child for more than 20 hours per week or for more than two unrelated children outside the children's home.

Before you submit an application for a license, you first need to complete an orientation. Contact the child care surveyor in the county where your facility will be located to schedule your orientation.

To find your local child care surveyor, visit the [How to Open a Licensed Child Care Facility](#) page on the KDHE website, and click the link under Step 2. Your local county contact will explain all the regulations and steps required for filling out the licensing application. You will also receive a copy of the regulation book and have the opportunity to ask questions.

There are three types of regulated family child care: Licensed Day Care Home, Group Day Care Home, and Child Care Center.

All have the following requirements:

- Annual inspection from your local licensing surveyor
- Annual fire inspection
- Pediatric first aid and pediatric CPR training
- Complete health records for all children and staff, including up-to-date immunizations
- Initial and ongoing professional development training
- Annual written licensing renewal paperwork
- Provider must be at least 18 years of age
- Provider must have a high school degree or equivalent, such as a GED
- All household members must pass a comprehensive background check, including an FBI fingerprint check
- All household members must have a physical examination, as well as a TB test on file for anyone over age 16

During the licensing process, you may be issued a temporary permit valid for 90 days. When you have a temporary license, you must follow the same regulations as a provider with a permanent license. Contact your licensing surveyor to find out how to start a child care facility application. ●

# REQUIRED RATIOS FOR CHILD CARE

## Licensed Day Care Home

A child care facility in which care is provided for a maximum of 10 children under age 16, including children under age 11 who are related to the provider. The total number of children in care at any one time is based on the ages of the children.

RATIO OF CHILDREN TO ONE PROVIDER

Under 18 months	18 months to Kindergarten	Kindergarten to 11 years	Total Max
3	3	2	8
2	4	3	9
1	5	4	10
0	7	3	10

Note: Children who are Kindergarten age or older may be substituted for younger children in the license capacity. Source: [www.kdheks.gov](http://www.kdheks.gov)

## Group Day Care Home

A child care facility in which care is provided for a maximum of 12 children under age 16, including children under age 11 who are related to the provider. The total number of children in care at any one time is based on the ages of the children and may require the presence of another qualified teacher/provider.

RATIO OF CHILDREN TO TWO PROVIDERS

Under 18 months	18 months to Kindergarten	Kindergarten to 11 years	Total Max
1	8	3	12
2	7	3	12
3	6	3	12
4	4	2	10

Note: Children who are Kindergarten age or older may be substituted for younger children in the license capacity. Source: [www.kdheks.gov](http://www.kdheks.gov)

## Child Care Center

A child care facility in which care and educational activities are provided for 13 or more children from two weeks old to age 16 for more than three hours and less than 24 hours per day — including daytime, evening, and nighttime care — or which provides before- and after-school care for school-age children.

Age of Children	Minimum Staff/Child Ratio	Max Staff/Child Ratio
Infants (2 weeks to 12 months)	1 to 3	9
Infants to 6 years	1 to 4 (max. 2 infants)	8 (max. 4 infants)
Toddlers (12 mos. to 2 1/2 years, if walking alone)	1 to 5	10
2 to 3 years	1 to 7	14
2 1/2 years to school age	1 to 10	20
3 years to school age	1 to 12	24
Kindergarten enrollees	1 to 14	28
School age	1 to 16	32

# Starting a Child Care Business Just Got **WAY EASIER**



**BY BETH DIBBEN**

A child care provider has two primary responsibilities. The first is the obvious one: caring for and teaching young children. This is the reason most people are attracted to early care and education. The second undertaking — and often the most challenging — is becoming a small business owner. When I started as a family child care provider over 10 years ago, I just wanted to teach young children. I didn't realize how big that small business piece of the job was.

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**Over the past 10 years, the business of being a family child care provider has changed significantly.**

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Over the past 10 years, the business of being a family child care provider has changed significantly — especially in regards to state requirements, background checks, curriculum requirements, and initial start-up requirements. All of these regulations are essential for keeping the children in our communities safe, but they have also made it a daunting process for new providers.

Fortunately, if you're looking to start a child care business, you now have access to Child Care Health Consultants to guide you through the sometimes overwhelming process, to help you understand the

importance of the health and safety regulations you're required to follow, and to teach you about business operations, such as writing a contract, keeping track of receipts, and investing in your business and yourself.

In my position as a Child Care Health Consultant, I often hear from new child care providers who are overwhelmed by the specifics of the health and safety regulations, the minutiae of running a small business, and the expense of purchasing the items needed to welcome children on that first day. My job is to guide them through these challenges.

With the start-up stipend and the third round of sustainability grants, it's a great time to enter the child care field. You'll receive guidance and support during the start-up process and financial assistance to help you provide a fun, safe, comfortable, and educational environment.

In the past, it took years for home-based providers to purchase or create everything needed to teach a well-rounded program that supports the physical, behavioral, and educational needs of children. That's no longer the case. Since 90 percent of children's brain development happens by age 5, early childhood programs need to hit the ground running. With curriculum, toys, training, and an experienced consultant to walk them

through the first weeks, months, and years of their early childhood programs, new providers can make a difference in children's lives from day one.

Yes, you'll face challenges starting a child care business. But you'll have someone — and some funds — to guide you along the way. Plus, the rewards greatly outweigh the frustrations. As a family child care provider, you become the very first teacher for the children in your care. You are welcomed into other families and lives. You get to create an environment tailored to the needs of the small group of children in your care — unlike any other point in their educational journey.

What you do for children now — providing the groundwork in reading, math, and science, as well as teaching social skills and kindness — will make an impact on generations to come. That is the biggest reward of all. ●



**BETH DIBBEN**

Child Care Health Consultant,  
Child Start/Child Care Aware®  
of Kansas Region 2

Beth Dibben lives in Derby, Kansas, with her husband and children. She has a bachelor's degree in education. During her 13 years in the early childhood field, she has worked as a pre-K teacher and been a family child care provider. Beth is passionate about the need for quality early childhood care.



# How to Find the **RIGHT** Early Childhood Education Program For Your Family

## BY BRIDGET BANKS

Licensed daycare home or child care center? School-aged program or Head Start? There are so many options to consider and questions to ponder as you look for the right program and the right provider for your family. Here are some key points to reflect on as you begin your search.

### Who?

The provider you choose will be an extension of your family, because your child will spend nearly half of each day in their care. You want to be able to connect, communicate, and build a relationship with the provider. If there are ethnic or cultural differences, you need to know that your child will feel safe, included, valued, and loved. If you have concerns, you need to feel confident that your feelings will be validated.

Make sure you choose a provider who is more than qualified to have children in their care. Consider how much experience, training, and/or education the provider has. Ask how they handle behavior problems and whether they're able to check their own personal biases.

Discovering what kind of person the provider is — and then building a trusting relationship with them — is crucial to the well-being and developmental growth of your child.

### Where?

Consider whether your child would thrive best in a home or school setting.

- Is your child more comfortable in a cozier atmosphere, which a home provider can offer?
- Do they need a more structured curriculum setting, which center-based programs can provide?
- Do you want a program with a developmental curriculum, which offers developmentally appropriate play?
- Do you prefer a Montessori program, where children move from one activity to the next at their own pace?
- Could you see your child in an outdoor/nature program, where the kids spend most of their time outside exploring nature?

After choosing an appropriate setting, consider the program's distance from your home, as well as other important locations, like work or school. If your child falls ill, how long will it take you to pick them up?

You'll also want to consider the space itself — what we call the program environment. Is it clean, welcoming, and safe? If there is an outside playground, and is the equipment safe? Is the playground area fenced or gated? It's

crucial to know the ins and outs of the space where your child will be spending a great deal of time.

### When?

Finally, spend some time thinking about whether this is the right time for your child — and for you — to begin the child care journey. If your child is having anxiety or socialization or separation issues, they may not be ready quite yet.

Once you've found the right program for your child, make sure to point out how exciting the journey will be for all of you, especially if this is your child's first school experience. Be ready to offer patience, support, and love as your little one adjusts to the world outside and begins to lay the foundation for a successful education. ●



## BRIDGET BANKS

Child Care Health Consultant, Child Care Aware® of Kansas

Bridget is a mother of four, currently residing and working remotely from Topeka. Before her current role, she worked in the early childhood education world for seven years as a preschool teacher. Bridget is also an avid writer and a recently published author.



# Using a Career Pathway to Recruit and Retain Child Care Providers and Educators

**BY HANNAH MCGAHEY AND SARA GARDNER**

From 2017 to early 2020, Kansas lost more than 5,000 child care slots, according to the 2020 Child Care Supply Demand Report. That was before the pandemic caused an even more severe shortage across the state and the nation.

In order to reduce that shortage, we need to retain our current child care providers and educators and attract more to the field. Establishing a career pathway is a foundational tool for accomplishing these goals. That's why we're working to create an official Kansas Early Childhood Career Pathway.

A career pathway offers a visual illustration of the different ways professionals can progress through the early childhood field. For those just starting out, the pathway will provide an at-a-glance view of short-term opportunities, as well as options for growing into a long-term career. These opportunities can either build on an individual's previous experience in a career and technical education (CTE) program or start at the entry level to help them earn credentials and gain experience. Regardless of the trajectory they eventually take, the Career Pathway can be used as a recruitment tool for young adults who are looking to join the workforce.

For professionals already working in the early childhood field, the Career Pathway will have multiple entry points that acknowledge relevant prior learning and accomplishments. We know that individuals choose to work in early childhood education for a variety of personal reasons. They may not all follow the same path or start during the same season of their lives. For that reason, the Career Pathway will have multiple entry points so that it can be accessible and meaningful to as many people as possible.

Individuals who are interested in joining the early childhood workforce will be able to use the pathway as a reference

guide to efficiently leverage their previous accomplishments. They will be able to easily identify where they are on the pathway, depending on the child care setting they are interested in.

The Kansas Early Childhood Career Pathway values both community-based learning experiences and higher education. Although there are more and more resources available to make higher education accessible, this path may not be appropriate for everyone. Including a mastery-based approach on the Career Pathway recognizes individuals' years of expertise without necessitating higher education or foundational credentials long into their careers.

The Career Pathway will also create curriculum alignment and provide more challenging professional learning opportunities for those who want to continue their education beyond foundational knowledge. Including a mastery-based approach elevates the profession by creating high-quality learning opportunities and offering recognition of tenured educators. Both of these strengthen retention efforts.

Other meaningful retention-related components include job-embedded coaching and mentoring. Without intentional supports built into the infrastructure, working in child care can be very isolating. Job-embedded coaching offers educators the opportunity to improve their competencies and learn new skills in an environment that is conducive to their already demanding schedules. Mentoring is a great way to take advantage of experienced educators who are familiar with the field's nuances.

The Kansas Early Childhood Career Pathway efforts are ongoing, with a first draft and initial feedback sessions completed. Next steps include incorporating current feedback and creating an implementation plan to benefit the Kansas early childhood workforce.

View the current draft at [kschildrenscabinet.org/pathway](https://kschildrenscabinet.org/pathway). ●



**HANNAH MCGAHEY**

Workforce Coordinator,  
Kansas Children's Cabinet  
and Trust Fund

Hannah has been involved in initiatives related to the Preschool Development Grant Renewal (PDG-R) and the All in For Kansas Kids Strategic Plan since August 2020.



**SARA GARDNER**

Assistant Director, KU Center  
for Public Partnerships  
and Research

Sara's project portfolio at KU-CPPR centers around Kansas early childhood initiatives and broader systems-change work. She is the project lead on the Kansas Preschool Development B-5 Renewal Grant, serving as the state's overall project coordinator for the grant and helping support different governance groups, including the state directors team, the recommendations panel, and the Child Care Systems Improvement team. Before her current role, she worked for 10 years in development for child welfare, housing, and health-related nonprofits in the Kansas City metro area. Sara has an M.A. in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies from the University of Kansas and a B.S. in communications from the University of Miami (FL).



**READY TO**

**RECRUIT**

## Quality Training for New Child Care Providers

### BY LINDA LOGAN

Before the pandemic, the child care infrastructure was already struggling. Our state and nation are now experiencing unprecedented shortages in licensed homes and facilities and a reduction in qualified providers. Work has begun to address these shortages, but it will take a coordinated effort to solve the variety of issues that have caused our current situation.

One piece of the solution is ongoing training for all licensed providers. Research has linked child care quality and young children's developmental outcomes with the training of providers and educators. When child care staff receive professional development, they offer higher-quality and more developmentally appropriate activities to the children in their care. The providers are more responsive to each individual child and have appropriate expectations for their behavior and development.

Brain development in the first five years of a child's life is shaped by early experiences and safe relationships with trusted adults. That means child care is more than babysitting kids so parents can go to work. In fact, child care is an early learning setting that provides children with the foundational skills for school and life.

The best practice for onboarding all new employees is ongoing training, and the field of child care is no different. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Child Care Licensing requires training before approving a license.

To help providers fulfill licensing requirements and begin the foundational professional development they need, Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO) has developed an online training module. Currently, the Foundations for Safe and Healthy Early Care Facilities

Module covers 10 topics over two weeks and is facilitated by a KCCTO Trainer and Technical Assistance Specialist. Follow-up procedures during and after the course include peer-networking groups, one-on-one technical assistance phone calls, and support for providers to create an individualized professional development plan for ongoing training and education.

The topics included in the training module are:

- Basic child development
- Building and physical premises safety
- Child abuse and neglect: identification, reporting, and prevention
- Transportation safety
- Handling, storing, and disposing of hazardous materials and biological contaminants
- Emergency preparedness
- Prevention and control of infectious diseases
- Prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions
- Reducing the risk of SIDS and using safe sleep practices
- Medication administration

Providing the early childhood workforce with quality training and trainers is essential to recruiting new providers. Training helps providers and educators understand the importance of their work with children. They continue to learn and practice skills from the training and receive support from mentors, coaches, and other staff.

As the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and

Learning points out: "Young children require consistency of caregivers, settings, and experiences to have a strong foundation from which to grow and develop." Disruptions from staff turnover and inconsistent care can undermine children's and parents' sense of safety, and this damage is not easily repaired. Because attachment and social-emotional development is crucial for children's brain development and overall well-being, we need trained, quality professionals who will stay in the field for the long term.

With this new training in place, our state is ready to recruit more child care providers and early childhood educators. By offering ongoing professional development opportunities for the current workforce, we can help retain the quality workforce required for children's development and our state's economic future. ●



### LINDA LOGAN

Program Coordinator,  
Training & Technical  
Assistance Specialist,  
Kansas Child Care Training  
Opportunities (KCCTO)

Linda has spent the past 40 years working for and with young children and their families in early childhood education. She is grateful for the lessons learned from and with children, parents, and colleagues. Her grandchildren (ages 6, 3, and 2) continue to teach her new things and keep her on her toes, practicing what she preaches. Linda has been with KCCTO since 2008 in several different capacities, but coordinating and facilitating KCCTO's online courses for child care providers has been one of her primary – and favorite – responsibilities.

# An INNOVATIVE HUB for Training and Professional Development in Kansas City

BY JENNY BRANDT

It's been 17 years since I started as an intern at The Family Conservancy on the Early Care and Education (ECE) team. During that time, I've seen funding come and go, bright ideas soar, and incredibly impactful supports disappear. One thing has remained the same throughout my tenure, however; the ECE team is always working tirelessly to meet the demand for professional development for early childhood providers in the Kansas City metropolitan area.

The Kansas City metro area spreads over two states, which can be confusing to outsiders. But our ECE team knows it well. We work to keep each state's available resources straight for our providers. It's one of the first things we ask: "MO or KS?" Even so, we have always wanted an easier way for providers to find training — and more of it — wherever they are located in the Kansas City area.

Finally, more than three years ago, during a brainstorming meeting with community partners, an idea was proposed to create a hub at The Family Conservancy for professional development in Kansas City. We could create one central entry point for providers to find the professional development opportunities available in the area. As we mapped out the idea, we realized it had a multitude of possibilities.

With the hub, we could organize a core group of quality trainers. Rather than trying to provide so much of the training ourselves, The Family Conservancy could release a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to contract with those already providing specialized training. With this added capacity, facilitators could offer community training and visit providers on-site when requested.

Increasing the quantity and quality of the training available — as well as building a system to coordinate services — would simplify professional development for everyone, especially providers. They could use the hub to find other opportunities as well, such as coaching projects and other quality initiatives available in the community. The Family Conservancy would regularly collect data to assess the providers' engagement levels, determine what needs were not being met, and pivot when needed. Innovation would be key.

Local funders also loved the idea of making professional development high quality, comprehensive, and fluid. Rather than funding a single initiative, they could invest in a system of professional development and quality support for all early education providers in the Kansas City area.

Our community was dreaming big. Yet we knew we could get there together.

Now our collective dream has become a reality! Since the RFQ was released, The Family Conservancy has contracted with 13 trainers, resulting in increased offerings. A discount membership program was created, and special events are being scheduled. Finally, the online portal is currently being built and is expected to launch by June 2022.

It's so exciting to see this professional development solution in the Kansas City area! I cannot wait for providers to log in and easily find more opportunities available than ever before. ●



**JENNY BRANDT**

Director of Early Care and Education, The Family Conservancy

Jenny Brandt has over 20 years of experience in the field of early childhood, serving as director of Early Care and Education (ECE) at The Family Conservancy since 2012. Jenny has a strong focus on assessing the needs of early care and education providers in the Kansas City community and identifying or creating resources to meet their needs. Her favorite part of the work is coaching. She likes to encourage innovative thinking and help identify action steps to keep continual forward movement in the field.

# Recruiting and Retaining Culturally Responsive Staff in Early Childhood Education Settings



## BY BRIDGET BANKS

For the first time in history, we as a nation are focused on ensuring that our organizations, including our schools, establish intentional diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging efforts. That applies to early childhood education (ECE) programs, as well. It's more important than ever to promote diverse, equitable, and inclusive learning environments for our youngest children.

To ensure that all children in ECE programs are receiving the best possible start in life, it's imperative to recruit and retain staff who are culturally responsive and willing to engage diverse learners by building strategies to design and deliver lessons in learning spaces that promote success for all children.

Every student brings unique cultural strengths to the classroom, as does every ECE professional. When cultural backgrounds are not intentionally considered, programs suffer from disparities like language barriers, systemic discrimination, and lack of representation. These disparities can cause unnecessary turnover in a field that already struggles with retention due to historically low pay, minimal benefits, and lack of support.

Representation matters. When recruiting providers and educators, employers would benefit from thinking of their program as an extension of the larger structural and social issues of a variety of communities and cultures. Staff should be able to demonstrate sensitivity and inclusivity and truly respect

the differences of others. Not only should employees be able to recognize their own biases, but they should also be interested in the similarities and differences of others.

Furthermore, program leadership should be willing to do the same, affirming and encouraging a welcoming environment. When all staff members feel a sense of belonging — and that their diverse cultural backgrounds are celebrated — they are more apt to stay put in their jobs, despite low pay. Employees who feel that they have a voice where they work are more likely to be highly productive, creative, and willing to encourage others to join the team.

For healthy developmental growth, young children require consistency from the providers that care for them. Poor retention in ECE programs can be detrimental to the children, who must constantly rebuild relationships and adjust to new environments and routines.

Recruiting and retaining staff who understand the importance of culturally responsive teaching — and who recognize that the children are not the only learners in the classroom — will help nurture an environment that engages with diverse learners, builds trust, improves communication, and creates an atmosphere where staff, children, and their families feel valued and are able to thrive. ●

## RESOURCES

Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies: American University

Culturally Responsive Teaching in Early Childhood Education: Edutopia

Staff Recruitment and Retention: National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning

High-Quality Early Childhood Educators are the Key to Quality Programs for Children: NAEYC



### BRIDGET BANKS

Child Care Health Consultant, Child Care Aware® of Kansas

Bridget is a mother of four, currently residing and working remotely from Topeka. Before her current role, she worked in the early childhood education world for seven years as a preschool teacher. Bridget is also an avid writer and a recently published author.



# THE CHILD CARE...GAP

## What Do We Know? What Do We Do?

### BY LINDA SMITH

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed what any working parent in America already knew to be true — that the early childhood years hold amazing promise for the future. Unfortunately, that promise goes unfulfilled for so many of our children. Not because they lack potential, but because their parents’ circumstances either open doors or slam them shut within the first few days of life. The fact that nearly one-quarter of new mothers in our country go back to work within two weeks of giving birth says it all. Returning to work so soon is not a choice for many mothers, but a matter of survival.

When parents do return to work, they need child care. But we are failing them. There is so little infant care in most communities that new mothers are left to “figure it out” and “make it work.” It doesn’t get much easier as the child grows older. In our country, the best interests of our children are often in conflict with parents’ need to provide the basics of food and shelter.

We no longer debate what neuroscience tells us about the critical development of the human brain in the first five years of life, so why are we still debating the need for child care?

### Women in the Workforce

Recent reports from the Department of Labor indicate that labor force participation among women is lagging behind men (70% vs. 58%). Much of this

gap is attributed to unstable child care. Between 2020 and 2021, among mothers, the share of women who left the workforce was linked to the age of their youngest child, and the numbers were highest among those with children under age 6. A full 1.3 million fewer mothers were employed in September 2021 compared to before the pandemic began. Survey data from the Bipartisan Policy Institute (BPC) shows that the workforce dropout rate is highest among women with children under age 2.

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**The best interests of our children are often in conflict with parents’ need to provide the basics of food and shelter.**

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Even before the pandemic, child care responsibilities fell primarily on mothers. Despite decades of progress, mothers still spend almost twice as much time caring for children as fathers do. With the national unemployment rate now less than 4% and as low as 2.3% in some states, like Kansas, we as a nation cannot afford to ignore the challenges of women and child care.

### A Broken Business Model

Child care has its own issues. With a workforce that is predominately female (95.6%), poorly paid (an average hourly wage of \$12), and short on benefits, child care programs are struggling to compete for workers in this tight labor market. Some might suggest that the answer is simple: raising wages. But how can programs do this? With what money? Raising wages increases the fees that parents pay, and we know that child care is already unaffordable for many.

Before the pandemic, we had a severe shortage of child care, and the gap is only getting worse. BPC’s analysis of data from 35 states showed that 3.4 million children do not have access to a formal child care slot. That’s over 30% of the children in these states.

It is important to note that, as a percentage of need, the gap is even higher in rural parts of the country. Family child care has been declining for more than a decade — with a loss of 37% between 2008 and 2014. Both family child care providers and centers have suffered life-threatening blows due to COVID. Nationally, our surveys show that we’ve lost about 10% of our child care capacity. Before the pandemic, child care providers were operating under tight margins, and the child care workforce was chronically underpaid as a result. Now, the added health and safety requirements, combined with a tight labor market, have resulted in staff shortages throughout the child care

industry — making a bad situation even more desperate.

We are left with a business model that is completely broken: a market-based model that relies on sufficient demand to sustain the supply needed. However, assuming we pay the workforce commensurate with their skill and education levels, it simply costs more to produce a quality child care space than nearly all parents can afford.

### Billions of Dollars Lost

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## We are left with a business model that is completely broken.

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In sum, the lack of quality, affordable child care has an impact on our families and our economy. It's a problem we can no longer ignore. Working with economists, BPC estimated the economic impact of the gap over 10 years in three areas: family income, lost business productivity, and lost tax revenue. Taking just these three areas into account, the loss to our economy was as high as \$217 billion.

So have we learned from the pandemic, or are we bound to repeat our mistakes? Here's what we know:

- Child care is a prerequisite for parents' workforce participation, especially mothers.
- The economy is directly impacted by a parent's ability to access and afford child care.
- There is a significant gap in the amount of care available versus what is potentially needed.
- The lack of care has a substantial impact on businesses' productivity, family incomes, and our tax base.
- The lack of child care hurts both businesses and parents, but especially women.
- The child care business model is broken and unsustainable. Simply put, it costs more to produce quality child care than most parents can afford.
- The child care workforce is severely underpaid, and this in turn impacts

the quality of care and the future for millions of children.

- Child care operators cannot survive another major disruption — whether a flood, a tornado, a hurricane, or a pandemic. Without sustainable support, more child care programs will shutter.

Where do we go from here? It's clear that parents, businesses, and child care programs are all suffering. Parents, primarily women, are in a tough spot. Choosing between what's best for their children and putting food on the table is a choice no parent should have to make. Child care providers are exhausted and operating on fumes. And businesses are desperate for workers. All this tells us that we need a comprehensive and new approach to America's child care dilemma.

### Comprehensive Solutions

What has been tried did not work and will not work to fix child care. Why? Because nearly every attempt has been one-dimensional, while the problem is multi-faceted. The solutions lie in a shared model of responsibility and a shared approach to remedy the problems. We need a top-down/bottom-up approach that enlists the best minds in our communities and states. This must start with parents, but also include businesses, child care providers, education leaders, the faith community, and policymakers.

The current focus of federal policymakers is to give parents more purchasing power through the use of certificates. This will help parents, but if there is not enough child care available, they will still be left without choices. On the flip side, without stable funding, providers will still hesitate to raise wages for fear they won't always have the money to meet payroll. The child care workforce will continue to look elsewhere for jobs — jobs that pay enough for them to live on and jobs with benefits like sick leave and health insurance.

Starting at the local level, communities need to assess their child care needs and potential local solutions. Businesses can play a key role here by looking at

infrastructure and supporting efforts to expand care at the local level.

States need to support communities and offer the tools and technical assistance that's often missing. The federal government needs to step forward with funding similar to what was provided in the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan Act. These two funding streams simultaneously targeted both parents and providers. The funds were flexible enough for states to expand support to parents, for communities to expand the care available, and for providers to pay their teachers more.

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## We need a comprehensive and new approach to America's child care dilemma.

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Now is the time to learn from our past. Rather than revert back to a one-dimensional approach, we need to continue funding at levels sufficient and flexible enough to support parents, providers, and businesses comprehensively. This will allow states and communities to roll up their sleeves and get to work closing the gap between what parents need and what the child care sector can currently provide. ●



**LINDA SMITH**

Director of the Early Childhood Initiative, Bipartisan Policy Center

Before joining BPC, Linda most recently served as the deputy assistant secretary for early childhood development in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

In this role, she provided overall policy coordination for the Head Start and Early Head Start programs and the Child Care and Development Fund. She also served as the department's liaison to the U.S. Department of Education and other federal agencies.

# Rising Momentum to Improve Quality Child Care in Kansas



## BY NANCY ROHR

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, headlines about the shortage of child care and the high cost for families have proliferated. Many Kansas families aren't just hearing about it; they're experiencing it too. These concerns aren't new, but they've been highlighted by the pandemic's economic impact on our communities.

Fortunately, there's been new interest in and financial support for maintaining and increasing the number of child care programs in our state. But we can't just increase child care slots. The ultimate goal is for all programs to provide high-quality care to children.

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**A child's brain grows the fastest from birth through age 5.**

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A child's brain grows the fastest from birth through age 5. Research has shown that high-quality child care and early education programs can benefit children by improving their cognitive, language, math, and social skills. These skills then boost their success in school and minimize their need for special education services.

## What Makes a Quality Program

To determine the quality of a child care program, families should look for several characteristics:

- Caregivers have positive relationships with children and are responsive to their needs.
- Smaller classes or group sizes allow

for more one-on-one interaction and supervision.

- Health and safety guidelines are followed.
- Teachers and caregivers have education and ongoing training in the early childhood field.
- Age-appropriate books, toys, and materials are available to promote children's learning.
- Parents receive consistent communication and opportunities to get involved.

## How to Find Quality Care

To help families learn about and find quality child care, Child Care Aware® of Kansas maintains a database of licensed child care programs. They offer a list of child care referrals in the family's area, as well as a quality-care checklist to consult when researching and interviewing providers. Families can also view annual inspection results for licensed child care programs on the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) website. To begin your search, call 877-678-2548 or visit [ks.childcareaware.org/child-care-search](https://ks.childcareaware.org/child-care-search) for assistance and resources.

## Recruiting New Providers

New grant opportunities designed to recruit child care providers are now available. Start-up assistance and coaching in the areas of health, safety, and wellness is being offered to newly licensed child care providers. If you're struggling to find care and want to stay home with your child, this new grant may help you start your own child care business. To learn more, visit [ks.childcareaware.org/cchc](https://ks.childcareaware.org/cchc).

## Advocacy Opportunities for Families

While there is currently momentum and support across the state to improve child care accessibility and quality, it's important for policymakers to hear directly from families. Families can share their perspectives and experiences — especially the challenges they've faced and their need for high-quality care — by calling 855-750-3343 to connect with their regional Child Care Resource and Referral Outreach and Engagement Coordinator. The coordinator can also connect families with early childhood task forces in their area. Another way families can advocate for accessible, affordable, quality child care is by reaching out to their local chamber of commerce and government representatives.

Even though there is still much work to be done to increase the quantity and quality of child care in Kansas, it's heartening to see so much interest and support across the state. In the end, increasing high-quality child care options will see our children benefit from care in positive and safe learning environments. ●



## NANCY ROHR

Family Services Manager,  
Child Care Aware® of  
Eastern Kansas, Region 3

Nancy has worked in various positions for Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas for 13 years. She is currently the manager of the Parent Resource Center, which provides child care referrals to families searching for care. She has a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in social work from the University of Kansas. Throughout her career, Nancy has always enjoyed supporting families with information and connecting them to community resources.



# Elegir Cuidado Infantil de Calidad

## BY JESSICA SOTO-BOTELLO

Como padres de familia nuestro mas grande deseo es poder proteger de nuestros pequeños de todo mal y darles una buena educación para un futuro lleno de oportunidades. El bienestar de nuestros pequeños es nuestro mayor anhelo.

La mayoría de las veces en cuanto sabemos que viene en camino un bebe, ya estamos mirando al futuro preguntándonos que vida tendrá. En bromas con amistades tal vez comentemos va a ser policía, doctor, licenciada, etc. Nuestras ansias de conocer cómo será nos lleva a empezar a buscar recursos para poder enseñarles y darles todo lo que podamos en cuanto lleguen a este mundo.

También sabemos que mantener una familia y tener pequeños no es barato y hay que trabajar para poder lograr nuestros deseos en darles un buen futuro. Tener que trabajar para mantener a nuestras familias es donde vivimos la mitad de nuestro tiempo. Es por eso por lo que hay decisiones importantes que tenemos que considerar. Nuestras decisiones tienen un gran impacto en la vida de nuestros pequeños y es por lo que son muy importante de analizar y de asegurarnos que es la mejor decisión para nuestra familia.

El cuidado infantil es una decisión muy importante que padres de familia deben de considerar. Es muy importante que hagan su investigación cuando están eligiendo un lugar de cuidado infantil para sus pequeños. Como padres queremos lo mejor y una de nuestras prioridades es darles la mejor educación y que estén sanos y seguros. Por lo pronto es importante de empezar desde que están pequeños y buscar un programa que ofrezca un cuidado infantil de calidad.

Unas de las primeras preguntas que debe de hacer cuando este en búsqueda de cuidado infantil es ver si el programa tiene licencia por el estado de Kansas. Al tener esta acreditación por el estado de Kansas significa que son reconocidos y mantienen su programa bajo regulaciones del departamento de salud y medioambiente de Kansas. Como parte de su búsqueda sería bueno conversar con el programa y identificar qué pasos toman para mantener a sus pequeños sanos y seguros. Es importante saber la capacidad de niños que el programa tiene y la disponibilidad de adultos por grupo de niños. La comunicación con la familia al igual es muy importante. Al estar buscando un cuidado infantil quiere poder tener la confianza de que el programa va a mantener una rutina diaria de actividades de aprendizaje para sus pequeños donde sus valores culturales de su familia son respetados. Es importante saber que nuestros pequeños estén en un ambiente parecido a nuestro hogar donde ellos tengan la atención que se merecen.

Los lujos de un programa de cuidado infantil no son prioridad cuando en búsqueda de un programa para nuestros pequeños. Lo mas importante para nosotros los padres es poder tenerla confianza en decir que nuestros pequeños están sanos y seguros obteniendo una educación temprana en un programa de cuidado infantil de calidad. ●



### JESSICA SOTO-BOTELLO

Strategic Partnerships Manager,  
Child Care Aware® of Kansas

Jessica resides in Garden City, Kansas. She graduated from Fort Hays State University with a bachelor's in general studies with an emphasis in social services. Her passion has always been helping others and being a helping hand in moments of need.

## Referencias:

- Child Care Aware® of Kansas:  
Su búsqueda de cuidado infantil empieza aquí



# 10 REASONS TO BECOME AN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL



**BY MICHELLE GILBERT**

In Kansas and across the nation, there's a shortage of qualified early childhood professionals. In Kansas, the topic of workforce development comes up at virtually every meeting about our field. There's no denying early educators work hard for low pay, which can make recruitment a challenge. However, this work also brings many rewards you won't find in other professions.

## **The ability to help shape our future**

Working with young children is a nurturing profession. The love and care that early educators show children will shape how they treat others for the rest of their lives.

## **Supporting strong, healthy families**

In the early childhood field, our work is not just with young children, but with the whole family. Early educators have the opportunity to provide connections to community resources and support to help families thrive.

## **Working in a fun environment**

Young children are playful by nature. While early educators work extremely hard, there's also opportunity for fun. There are very few professions where playing dress-up or working with clay is actually encouraged!

## **Preventing child abuse & neglect**

Having daily contact with families, early childhood professionals provide a frontline of defense for young children when it comes to abuse and neglect.

## **Seeing children learn something new**

Young children are constantly learning! In fact, children learn more rapidly during the first three years than at any other time of life. Early educators find joy in planning experiences to support this development and seeing the magic in a child's eyes when they master new skills.

## **Every day is unique**

When working with a group of young children, there is rarely a dull moment. From the activities and experiences they plan to the environment they provide, early educators are continually adapting to keep things fresh for the children in their care.

## **Being part of a community of like-minded people**

The early childhood community is tight-knit and very supportive. By joining professional organizations, like the Child Care Providers Coalition (CCPC) or the Kansas Association for the Education of Young Children (KSAEYC), early educators have the opportunity to network with others who share their passion for young children and families.

## **The opportunity to be a lifelong learner**

It's often said that the best teachers are learners themselves. By attending professional development classes, teachers gain knowledge and skills to support their work with young children. By growing their own skills, early childhood professionals feel more confident and competent in their work.

## **All the hugs & macaroni necklaces you could ever want**

Young children find pleasure in the simple things in life. While working with young children, early educators get the chance to set aside the complexities of life, if just for a little while, and be "in the moment" with children as they share their special gifts.

## **The joy of making a positive difference in a child's life**

Every child deserves a champion — someone who believes in and encourages them to become the best version of themselves. Early childhood professionals have the honor of acting as advocates and cheerleaders for young children every single day!



# How We Help Families, Child Care Providers, and Communities

BY CHILD CARE AWARE® OF KANSAS STAFF



## Families

The Child Care Aware of Kansas Referral and Resource Network has referred hundreds of thousands of families to quality providers in the state. We are in regular contact with 98% of Kansas' licensed providers, and we collect detailed information about their rates, available openings, schedules, age groups, and services.

Starting your search for child care is easier than you think! If you're not ready to call, start by downloading our Child Care Search Brochure to learn more about the process. Once you're ready, call 1-877-678-2548 to speak with a Resource Center Counselor about your particular needs and preferences.

You can also search for a list of providers in your area through our online database at [ks.childcareaware.org](https://ks.childcareaware.org).

## Child Care Providers

Even if you hardly ever hear it, you're one of the most important people in our state. As a child care provider, you ensure that parents and guardians can work to support their families and contribute to our economy. More importantly, your tireless work serves as the bedrock for the next generation of Kansans. Child Care Aware of Kansas is here to help support Kansas providers in offering high-quality child care. We offer an array of programs to do just that.

The Child Care Health Consultant Network is a provider's partner in child care — offering free, customizable, on-demand consultation services, including start-up support for new or temporarily licensed child care programs. Consultants are regionally based and work directly with child care providers to implement high-quality health, safety,

and wellness best practices. Additional services include consultations with a registered nurse and an emergency preparedness and health equity consultant.

The Child Care Quality Initiative is a year-long opportunity for family child care programs to enhance quality through a variety of coaching and professional development events focused on nurturing positive child interactions and engaging families. The Early Care & Education Specialists provide services to child care program participants in their local communities.

The Child Care Aware of Kansas child care grants program is dedicated to disbursing COVID-relief funding directly to child care programs, as a result of the critical need caused by the pandemic. Funding can help programs with normal operational expenses in order to keep their doors open, as well as opportunities to increase safety and wellness. Current rounds of sustainability grants are open for application from March 1 through November 30, 2022.

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**We are in regular contact  
with 98% of Kansas'  
licensed providers.**

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Programs could be eligible for up to 14 months of payments.

The Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures program offers a variety of services to child care programs, such as breastfeeding support, assistance using the Go NAPSACC (Nutrition & Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care) tool, partnering with the Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to increase participation, and enhancing work on equity and diversity.

Links to Quality works with child care programs to build upon their strengths — “linking” together competencies such as program business practices, family partnerships, learning and development, and health and safety. To support this journey, Links to Quality provides



Community Consultants who coach, consult, and connect programs with resources through local Learning Communities. In addition, the free Program Administration Support service is available to all licensed child care providers in the state of Kansas and focuses on promoting solid business practices in child care environments.

## Communities

Child Care Aware of Kansas can help you understand what's needed to address systemic challenges in child care. We'll make it easy for you to learn about potential solutions and to start taking small, actionable steps.

The Community Outreach & Engagement team connects everyone with a stake in child care — parents, child care providers, businesses, local and state leaders, and community members — to the information and ideas they need to take action. Together, we aim to create an early care and education system that ensures:

- All kids have enriching early learning experiences within supportive caregiving environments.
- Parents have access to quality, affordable child care that meets their family's unique needs.
- Child care providers stay on a sustainable career path that allows them to support their own families and provide the best care for the kids they serve.
- Employers attract and retain a quality workforce.
- Communities — both large and small — provide a high quality of life that keeps current residents from leaving and draws in new families. ●





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**All In For  
Kansas Kids**

# Family Connect Modules

These five one-hour interactive modules connect your family to resources and services that promote healthy development of your children ages 0-5! Scan the QR code to learn more or visit us on [plus.greenbush.org](https://plus.greenbush.org)!

This project was made possible by grant number 90TP0078-01-00. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.



## Families: Get a Stipend for Online Learning

As a proud recipient of an All In For Kansas Kids Quality Subgrant through the Kansas Children’s Cabinet and Trust Fund, the Southeast Kansas Education Service Center - Greenbush has developed and disseminated interactive modules for families, caregivers, and providers. The modules were created in alignment with the Kansas Family Engagement and Partnership Standards for Early Childhood and have been shared with early childhood programs and organizations throughout the state.

Five interactive modules have been developed to connect families to services:

- Families as 1) Foundation 2) Communicators
- 3) Advocates 4) Partners 5) Community Members


Each module consists of three or four sections with resources and information, activities, and short quizzes. Modules take approximately one hour to complete. At the conclusion of each module, participants will submit an evaluation and a W-9 so they may receive a \$25 stipend per module completed.

To access the modules, please use the QR code in the ad above. For assistance, contact Barbara Gannaway at [barbara.gannaway@greenbush.org](mailto:barbara.gannaway@greenbush.org).

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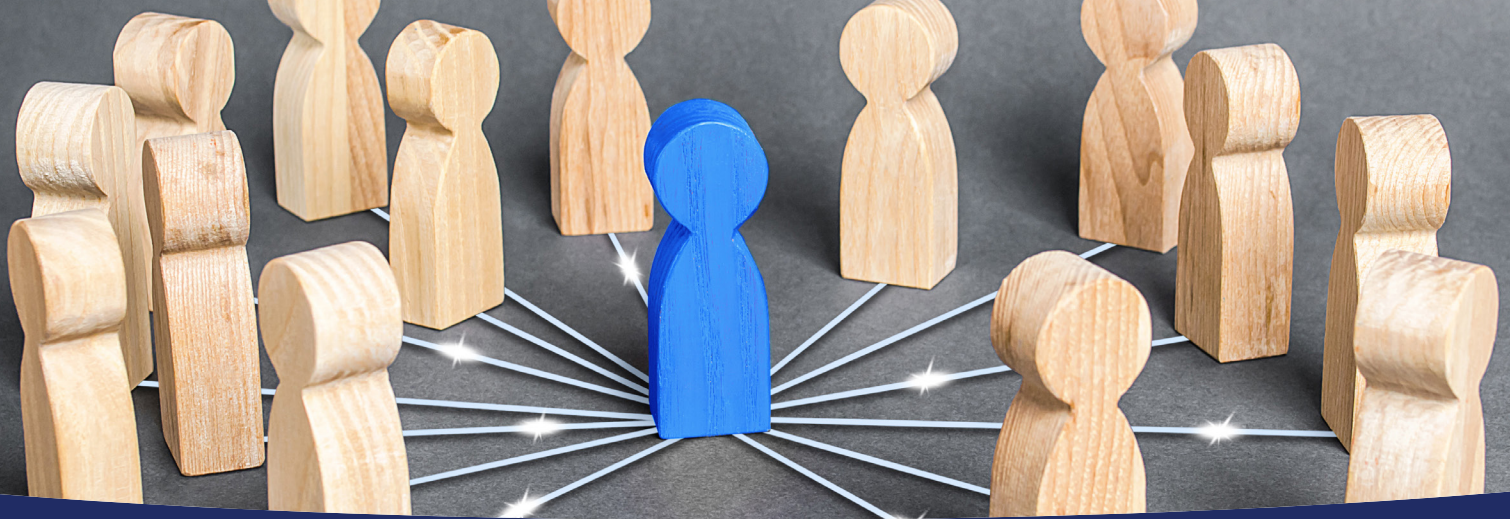
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# DOES YOUR COUNTY HAVE A CHILD CARE SHORTAGE?

All families deserve equitable and consistent access to high-quality early care and learning opportunities. Unfortunately, child care availability varies widely across Kansas. Our comprehensive point-in-time data, organized by county, is meant to assist local communities – including families, employers, and other community leaders – as they work to address critical child care shortages.

Select your county to retrieve information about the status of child care supply and demand in your area. You'll also find:

- Information about the different types of child care available
- Rates for part-time and full-time care
- Census data

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Visit our website today to find out more!

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