

Prevention in Kansas



Event provides another year of joy for families

Since 1987, The Children’s Shelter, Lawrence, has hosted the annual Festival of Trees to raise donations for families during the holidays by auctioning beautifully decorated trees and wreaths. Planning for the event begins in early fall as the trees and wreaths are set up by the volunteers the weekend after Thanksgiving.

Traditionally, a gala auction party has been held with a silent auction during the gala. Due to COVID-19, this wasn’t an option and instead guests were able to reserve times to view the trees in person or drop-in if viewing was not at capacity, per the Lawrence Douglas County Health Department recommendations. This year was also a first as the auction went completely online for bidding, which opened on a Monday and ended on a Friday evening.

The Children’s Shelter Family Services program was able to provide gifts to 42

families in the Northeast and Southeast Regions through the Festival of Trees mitten tree. Mitten-shaped ornaments bore requests for children’s gift wishes, a family gift to be enjoyed together, and a gift card to purchase food for a family holiday meal. “We were able to meet families’ wishes because of the overwhelming support of our community members,” said executive director at The Children’s Shelter, Joyce DeBolt. “We hope other communities are inspired by the success we’ve had.”

Two donors offered larger donations to provide two families with secure housing to avoid risk of homelessness.

The Children’s Shelter staff delivered the gifts to the families and were met with overwhelming gratitude.

The Children’s Shelter is a DCF Family Services grantee for the Northeast and Southeast regions

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Read past issues visit the

[Newsletter Archive](#)

Email us at:

DCF.FamilyFirst@ks.gov



Above left: the Festival of Trees set up for the public.
Above: The mitten tree. Each mitten ornament holds a Christmas gift wish for children and families.

Our Tomorrows – Lifting Kansas Voices to Build a Brighter Future



Write-up provided by the University of Kansas Our Tomorrows team

In 2018, University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research (CPPR) sought to lift the everyday stories of real Kansans to the forefront of conversations to help inform public policy and programming for children, youth, and families through a brand new project called *Our Tomorrows*. Five thousand stories and three years later, through a strong partnership with the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund (KCCTF), the *Our Tomorrows* project has done just that!

Since then, the [Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund](#) examined the patterns and stories in-depth, to understand what families need to thrive and used the findings as the foundation for the [Statewide Needs Assessment](#) and [All in for Kansas Kids Strategic Plan for Early Childhood](#). Authentic feedback is vital to building an early childhood care and education system that helps ALL families thrive. As we update these documents and implement these strategies, we will continue to ask stakeholders and families to generously share their experiences.

Through the KCCTF Quality Improvement Subgrants and DCF Family First Prevention programs, state departments are bringing funded partners and stakeholders into this effort by adding new voices and data to bolster those initiatives. Specifically, the Family First partners will use stories to examine the impact of selected community-based prevention programs to strengthen families and prevent child welfare involvement in the state of Kansas. Quality Improvement Subgrantees will use stories to grow and refine their own community based solutions for early childhood across the state. Weaving a culture of feedback and engagement into

project evaluation will build authenticity, trust, and empower more Kansans to engage with the many efforts to improve our services.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Our Tomorrows delivered real-time information about the impact of the virus on Kansas communities. State departments, like DCF, used these to build supports through the Hero Relief Fund and [KCCTF developed grants](#) to ensure all families had safe, virtual access to system resources and remote learning.

Through Our Tomorrows, the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund will continue to identify what families need to thrive, while building 2021 Coronavirus Relief Fund distribution. The COVID-19 vaccine roll-out is steadily moving forward and bringing hope. Unfortunately, many Kansans are experiencing renewed stress, isolation, and fatigue while waiting for safety and relief. A new phase of challenges calls for new funding and new solutions built on your lived experiences. Family and provider experiences can help

drive decision-making as new funding becomes available. Your story is more impactful now, than ever.

We want to know what you are going through; how you are coping; your needs, challenges, and struggles; and your reflections and insights on any new opportunities or “bright spots” that are emerging from these unprecedented times. Your contribution to the story collection will make a difference.

As Kansans, we help each other get through tough times. We will meet this challenge together and leverage our strengths to build the future we want.

If you are a decision-maker at your organization, state agency, or other entity and you'd like to be connected to this effort, please reach out to the [Our Tomorrows team](#). We would love to talk about how we can collect stories of Kansans in your area for local data to help you make locally-informed decisions.



See Our Tomorrows in Action—
Virtual Sensemaking Session

Friday, February 5th, 1-3PM

at the [Early Childhood Stakeholder Group Meeting*](#)

Join us as we dive into the stories of Kansans over the last several months. We want to hear your perspective as you explore trends, patterns, and learn from the unique experiences of Kansans. Help us prepare for this session— take a few minutes to share an experience from your family, or someone you know.

Share your story at: <https://ourtomorrows/DCF>

Spread the word! After you've shared, pair this link with a request for stories on your social media, at staff meetings, in your weekly newsletter, or any other communication outlet—our work is most powerful when we hear from all voices!

*All are invited to join this meeting, please note that [registration is required](#). Each registrant will receive a unique link to join, as well as a calendar invite. We also invite you to attend the Children's Cabinet meeting (click to register) from 9:00AM – 12:00PM on Friday, Feb. 5. Both meetings will be held virtually.

TANF Grant Spotlights: Early Head Start Programs

This is our fourth installment of TANF Grant spotlights. Visit the [September](#) issue for information about the TANF funded in-school and after-school programs in Kansas, the [November](#) issue for youth and family stability grants, and the [December](#) issue for domestic violence and sexual abuse services.

A key component of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) is the creation of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. TANF is a federally funded block grant, administered by the Office of Family Assistance by the Administration for Children & Families through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. States use TANF funds to design and implement programs intended to assist needy families in achieving

self-sufficiency. Within the Kansas DCF, TANF funded programs are managed by the Economic and Employment Services (EES) division.

While states are allowed great latitude in TANF spending, TANF funded programs must meet at least one of the following four federally legislated purposes.

- provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
- end the dependence of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
- prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies
- encourage the formation and maintenance of two parent families.

The following spotlighted grants represent the TANF supported Kansas Early Head Start Home Visitation Programs. KEHS-HV across the State offer home visits and group socialization activities for their parents and children. Children can be served ages 0-3 with their families and can include children who are a part of the foster care system. These grants are awarded every three years. The partners have been serving Kansas families for several years. Each of these partners have a similar set of goals and services they offer to families, but all work with at risk children and their families on building healthy relationships, overcoming a variety of barriers each family faces and helps prepare the children for success in a school setting. Each partner will also refer each family to additional services, both within DCF and outside, as needed.

Community Action's Early Head Start program saved my daughter's life and probably mine too. Her daily interaction with the other kids and the care she received from the staff really helped her thrive. It also gave me time, while she was at school, to get my thoughts together. It helped me keep going when times seemed really hard.

Community Action Early Head Start- With services also available through a partnership with TDC Learning Centers in Topeka KS. We serve low-income families living in Shawnee County, primarily in the zip codes of 66605 and 66607.

Our program currently has slots funded for fifty-four children up to thirty-six months of age. In Spring 2021 sixteen additional slots will be available for enrollment. Funding for these slots is from both state and federal sources, therefore, qualifications to enroll may differ. All our services are center based, offering at least eight hours of care, five days per week for children.

Community Action Early Head Start is proud to provide mixed age classrooms for our services at the Susan M. Wheatley Center. This supports children in staying with the same caregivers over an extended period. It also allows for the highest need child to be selected from the wait list, without needing to match the age of the next child to the one that just exited the program.

On the same campus, Community Action Head Start provides preschool services for sixty children. These services allow a family to spend five years working with the same program as the child and family grow.

To learn more, please visit <http://www.wefightpoverty.org>.



Above left: an excerpt from a letter written by a parent from the Early Head Start program in support of Community Action Head Start **Below left:** Frontline staff from Community Action-Head Start (courtesy of Facebook)

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TANF Grant Spotlights: Early Head Start programs (cont.)

Clay County Child Care Center was awarded their first Early Head Start grant in 1999 and began serving families in Clay, Cloud and Washington Counties in central Kansas. In 2002, Ottawa and Republic Counties were added. The main office for Early Head Start is located in Clay Center with a second office in Concordia. Currently, 78 families are being served with a capacity of 100, consisting of prenatal mothers and children ages 0-3 years old. This is a mix of 40 federal home-based slots, 30 state home-based slots and 30 childcare slots with seven partner childcare settings in three counties.

Nine home visitors travel to all five counties to see families. Home visitors come to the office the first of the week, and gather supplies to travel the rest of the week to see families. Home-based children or prenatal mothers complete weekly required home visits and the childcare children receive a family

support visit and parent/provider visit quarterly and the home visitor will see the childcare provider monthly along with a monthly childcare visit from our childcare coordinator.



Although Covid-19 has been a challenge, Clay County Child Care Center has transitioned between virtual and in-home visits, as needed, all while using precautions already in place (masks, social distance and sanitizing). The Center also completes joint virtual visits with our Part C (disability) providers so

that a family only has to complete one virtual visit per week.

During these times of virtual visits, an agency wide lesson plan has been implemented. Home visitors individualize plans for each child in their weekly packets that are delivered to homes. Once the packets are delivered, the home visitor calls the family to review the packet and make suggestions about other things that could be utilized in their home.

The center also prepares a monthly support newsletter called 'Toddler Times.' One of the families shared a quote in the January newsletter, "We enjoy all the activities Early Head Start provides and we get a lot of support with the children and life issues".

Visit the Clay County Child Care Center website to learn more about programs and enrollment: <https://www.claycountychildcare.com/>

Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL) is a statewide agency offering a multitude of programs addressing various needs. In southwest Kansas, most counties are only meeting about a third of their actual demand for child care. Some counties, especially in smaller rural areas do not have a child care center at all. KCSL has placed emphasis on Early Childhood Education by offering Head Start and Early Head Start services in centers and in homes.

Over 194 children receive KCSL home-based services over ten southwest Kansas counties. 24 children are served in centers thanks to KCSL's partnership with the Department for Children and Families.

KCSL's Child Care Partnership has allowed for 5 additional classrooms to open, serving children from birth to 3 years. Classrooms are offered in both Seward and Finney counties. KCSL also successfully forged an additional partnership with Dreamz Child Care Center, in Liberal, KS.

Though programs are designed to serve the needs of children, supports are offered to the entire family. KCSL staff work with families to establish goals and develop a plan to achieve goals, providing support and guidance along the way. Children directly benefit from KCSL child care services and indirectly benefit when their parents are able to provide a safe and

nurturing home.

"We know our communities thrive when our families thrive. We teach parents how to take action so they can continue to thrive in their community", Gail Cozadd, chief executive officer.

To learn more about Kansas Children's Service League Early Childhood Education programs visit www.kcsl.org

So I would just like to share what I feel about KCSL. I will forever recommend this program to anyone that asks. I absolutely LOVE KCSL. Not only is the program awesome, but the staff is great.

A note from a family enrolled in an Early Head Start program at KCSL

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TANF Grant Spotlights: Early Head Start programs (cont.)

USD #489 Early Childhood Connections—The mission of Early Childhood Connections is to empower families to nurture children, family, and community connections. Early Childhood Connections serves 4 counties in West Central Kansas; Ellis, Rush, Rooks and Russell. Each of these counties has diverse population needs and characteristics and is primarily rural. The service area includes 3,375 square miles, approximately 13 individuals per square mile, and includes numerous small communities. Ellis County is the largest populated area and has approximately 32 individuals per square mile compared to Rush County with 4 individuals per square mile. The community of Hays provides many regional services to the families and communities within Ellis, Rush, Russell, and Rooks Counties. Hays is a regional service center for retail, employment, business, medical, and social service agencies.

Early Childhood Connections program currently provides center-based services to 164 children ages three to four. Children in Hays are served at the USD 489 Early



Childhood Complex site. The program has five full-day sessions and two half-day sessions. The program partners with the Russell School District to provide two half-day sessions at Simpson Elementary. A collaborative classroom with USD #388 Ellis is housed at Washington Elementary. It is a combination of tuition-based and Head Start eligible children. The program also provides home-based services to children who live outside the Hays or Russell area and/or are unable to

get their children to a classroom. Funding for these services is through Head Start and State Prekindergarten grants.

Early Childhood Connections (prenatal through three years of age) combine Early Head Start and Parents As Teacher services to serve pregnant women, infants, and toddlers. Ninety-two pregnant women, infants, and toddlers receive Early Head Start services in Ellis, Rush, Russell, and Rooks counties. Of the 92 pregnant women, infants and toddlers served, 41 are funded by the DCF (Department for Children and Families Home Visitation Grant), 24 served by DCF (Department for Children and Families Child Care Partnership Grant), and 27 are funded by the Federal Early Head Start program. The Parents as Teachers program provides services to children in USD #489 and USD #407 Service Area.

Services are provided through several models (home-based, center-based, family childcare). An EHS center-based childcare site is located at the USD #489 Early Childhood Complex and accommodates 22 children. The program partners with six family childcare providers in Ellis and Russell Counties. The childcare options (family and center-based) available allow families to choose the childcare that best fits their philosophy of care and meets their work and training schedule. Home-based services which include weekly visits and playgrounds are offered to 52 families in our service area. Donna Hudson-Hamilton, Director of Early Childhood Services said, “As a program, we are fortunate to receive funding from both state and federal grants. Without both grant opportunities, many people would remain on our waitlist and not receive services.”

To learn more about Early Head Start with Early Childhood Connections: <https://www.usd489.com/o/early-childhood/page/early-head-start>

To learn more about Kansas Early Head Start and to find a program location near you go to <https://www.ksheadstart.org/>

Full list of TANF EHS grants and counties served:

Bright Beginnings (Ford)

Clay County Child Care Center (Clay, Cloud, Ottawa, Republic, Washington)

Community Action Early Head Start (Shawnee, Wabaunsee)

Early Childhood Connections (Ellis, Rooks, Rush, Russell)

ECKAN Head Start (Anderson, Coffey, Douglas, Franklin, Lyon, Miami, Osage)

Growing Futures (Johnson)

Heartland Early Childhood Programs (Dickinson, Ellsworth, Saline)

Kansas Children's Service League (Finney, Grant, Gray, Haskell, Kearney, Kingman, Pratt, Scott, Seward, Stafford, Stanton, Stevens, Wichita)

Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center (NKESC) Head Start (Cheyenne, Decatur, Gove, Graham, Logan, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Sherman, Thomas, Trego, Wallace)

Project Eagle (Wyandotte)

SEK-CAP (Allen, Bourbon, Chautauqua, Cherokee, Crawford, Elk, Labette, Linn, Montgomery, Neosho, Wilson, Woodson)

Crossover Youth Practice Model Listening Sessions

Programs, services, and activities developed in partnership with youth and families are more likely to be effective in engaging them and, therefore, to have a greater impact. To that end, the Leadership Teams in the CYPM pilot sites, Shawnee and Montgomery Counties, are preparing to facilitate Listening Sessions.

Listening Sessions are similar to focus groups where space is created for individuals to share their perspectives and experiences. Specifically, youth and their families who have had cases open with both the child welfare and the justice system will be asked about those experiences. The outcomes of the conversations will be synthesized to inform and identify meaningful actions that can be taken to address and support crossover youth in each community.

Involving youth and families as partners in making decisions that affect them increases the likelihood that decisions made will be accepted. Including their voices not only helps them feel valued, and connected to their communities, but communities and systems benefit by learning to better understand and value youth, coordinate services, and improve services.

To learn more about the Crossover Youth Practice Model and information regarding past and upcoming meetings of the State Policy Team visit: <https://www.doc.ks.gov/juvenile-services/crossover-youth-practice-model>



Catch up on the previous updates for the Crossover Youth Practice Model

*Click on the newsletter to link to the issue

October - Introduction to the Crossover Youth Practice Model State Policy Team

November - Pilot sites and local leadership teams

December - Crossover Youth State Policy Team workgroups

The Statewide Coordinators are available and open to answering questions, assisting in identifying appropriate responses, addressing, and troubleshooting concerns, and/or participating in meetings and collaborative and collaborative issues regarding all crossover youth. Please reach out to: Ashley.brown@ks.gov and Michelle.montgomery@ks.gov