

Summary of the Kansas Head Start 2024 Needs Assessment

The Kansas Head Start Collaboration Office, funded through a grant from the Department for Health and Human Services/Administration for Children and Families/Office of Head Start, conducts an annual needs assessment to identify gaps in collaboration amongst Kansas Head Start grantees, their partners, and other service providers. The Kansas Head Start Collaboration Office (HSCO) engaged the Kansas Head Start Association (KHSA) to conduct the 2024 Kansas Head Start Needs Assessment. HSCO and KHSA work in close partnership together to connect Kansas Head Start programs, staff, and families with important resources and services throughout the state.



A mix of 25 school districts, community action agencies, and non-profit organizations administer \$90 million+ in federal Head Start grants in the majority of Kansas counties. These programs provide services to Kansas families through all Head Start program options (Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships). In FY23, Kansas programs received funding for 6,257 HS slots. Programs employ nearly 2,500 individuals.

Fourteen of the 25 Kansas Head Start programs, or 56%, participated in the 2024 Kansas Head Start Needs Assessment process. Programs shared challenges and successful strategies for providing Head Start services. While each shared circumstances, approaches, and partnerships specific to the communities in their service areas, a few common themes surfaced.

1. Programs are creative, flexible, and committed to services and partnerships that meet the needs of children and families in their communities.
2. Opportunity exists to strengthen partnerships that support the recruitment and enrollment of families categorically eligible for Head Start (families that receive public assistance, have a child placed in foster care, and/or are experiencing homelessness).
3. Recruiting and retaining qualified Head Start staff in both classroom and non-classroom positions is a continued challenge impacting enrollment.

We strive to meet the individual needs of every child and family we serve. We believe in partnering with other community resources to help families meet their goals. Our staff show up every day dedicated to serving others and we are proud of their commitment and determination while facing significant challenges. – Focus Group Participant

The 2024 Kansas Head Start Needs Assessment findings touch on the sustained impacts of workforce challenges and intensive family needs on programs. While these challenges provide opportunities for developing and growing additional partnerships at the state and local levels, and prompt programs to be flexible and creative with their time, efforts, and resources, these factors all impact the capacity of programs to serve Head Start eligible children and families in Kansas.

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