



Early Childhood Providers Roundtable Summary and Impact of Kansas Early Learning Collaborative Grant in Johnson County

On January 26, United Community Services (UCS) facilitated a roundtable discussion with Early Childhood Providers. *Navigating the Future: Setting the Course 2007 – 2011*, a community action plan published by UCS (see www.ucsjoco.org), identified early learning for school readiness as a key strategic priority. As UCS advances this priority, and works with the Kansas Coalition for School Readiness, the Roundtable provided an opportunity for the Early Childhood community to learn more about state-wide early childhood activity, and to discuss community issues and concerns. The facilitated conversation helped providers identify needs and consider ways to meet those needs, as well as to discuss the establishment of the Johnson County Early Learning Collaborative, a requirement of the Kansas Early Learning Collaborative (KLEC) grant awarded by Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, Early Childhood Block Grant.

Challenges and Issues in Early Childhood Learning and Development in Johnson County **Summary of Roundtable Discussion January 26, 2009**

Messaging – Raising awareness and champions

Kansas Coalition for School Readiness currently leads this effort with local partners (United Community Services is Johnson County partner, Family Conservancy is Wyandotte County partner, and El Centro is regional Latino-outreach partner).

- Need to continue getting message out about importance of early childhood.
- Need advocates outside of early childhood system (especially to reach legislators).
- Need for united message about value of early education and to be positioned as collaborative system to respond to funding opportunities such as the Early Childhood Block Grant.

Staff and Operational Issues

Partners in Quality, a metropolitan coalition through Mid-America Regional Council, addresses staff and operational issues. Family Conservancy maintains a training calendar for early childhood providers. Johnson County Health Department and Johnson County Community College, as well as others, provide training.

- Growing diversity and not enough bi-lingual staff.
- Need for early intervention.
- Need central coordinated intake system; first step: create matrix of services which includes description of services, who is served, and criteria for service.
- Ensure right services are linked to needs; including parent education.
- Address gap in continuum (3-4 yr-old and 2-4 year-olds).
- Quality care and education for all Jo. Co. young children.
- Trained staff.

Collaboration/Service Integration: Need for coordination in order to maximize resources.

Parenting

- Parent education.
- Cultural barriers in serving children and families.
- Engage parents; address diversity of needs.
- Families face higher needs (economic).

Special services – mental health and language

- Need more mental health services for very young children and families.
- Lack of resources for mental health needs.

- Accommodate emotional-social needs of young children.
- Need more in-home resources to address special needs.

Funding

- Expansion of Pre-K impacts other providers (2 recently closed).

Discussion: Formation of Johnson County Early Childhood Collaborative

The Kansas Early Learning Collaborative (KELC) received an Early Childhood Block Grant of \$6,015,040 for a 12 county area which includes Johnson, Wyandotte and Leavenworth Counties. There are six statewide organizational partners: Kansas Association of Child Care Resource and Referral (KACCRRRA), Kansas Association of Infant Mental Health (KAIMH), Kansas Children's Service League Healthy Families (KCSL HF), Kansas Division of Early Childhood (KDEC), Kansas Head Start Association (KHSA), the Kansas Parents As Teachers Association (KPTAA).

All Kansas Early Learning Collaborative (KELC) counties are required to have county collaboration for the integration of prenatal to age 5 services. Providers receiving funds through the KELC are required to be part of a local collaborative. KLEC partners will meet in Salina on January 29 and will discuss local collaboration efforts. Johnson County providers at UCS' January Roundtable discussed current local collaborative efforts which include the Early Childhood Family Support Advisory Committee facilitated by ITSJC, and the Mental Health Group of ITSJC. ITSJC has also served as the Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC) which focused on services to preschool children (0-5) with special needs. United Community Services has facilitated meetings of early childhood providers and is Johnson County's human service community planning organization. Providers at the January Roundtable did not object to ITSJC taking-on the role of the local collaborative through its existing groups, but cautioned that the focus of the local collaborative needs to be on all infants and toddlers, not just those with special needs. Further, it was noted that it may be awkward for ITSJC to convene this collaborative because it is one of the grant recipients (need for shared leadership was mentioned).

Attended: Helen Imel (JCMH), Katrina Ball (Family Conservancy), Ramona Downs (Family Conservancy), Keri Young (Head Start of Shawnee Mission), Terrie VanZandt Travis (Head Start of Shawnee Mission), Wendy Webb (Blue Valley Parents as Teachers), Sara McElhenny (JCCC), Jennifer Traffis (Tri-Co Smart Start, UW Wyn. Co.), Vicki Barnes (JCHD), Claire Ehney (JCCC), Nancy Mitchell (MCEL, MARC), Michelle Wallace-Beaven (SM Smart Start), Cheryl Tolbert (SRS), Mary Baskett (KS Head Start Assn.), Tracie Lansing (KS Children's Service League), Amy Owens (Infant Toddler Services Johnson County), Patty McCollum (KCSL – Healthy Families), Raylene Heitman (Gardner SD), Nancy Keel (Olathe PAT, KPATA), Theresa Hitt (JCCC ESL/MES Preschool, ITSJC), Barbara Inman (De Soto PAT), Kim Sill (Olathe Head Start/OSD), Karen Wulfkuhle (UCS).

Subsequent to the January Roundtable, KELC partners have shared the following information regarding how grant funds will be used in Johnson County:

- KACCRRRA: Some work on Kansas Quality Rating System (KQRS), but majority of services in Kansas metro-area will be provided in Wyandotte County.
- KAIMH: Will identify sites in Johnson County that serve significant population of at-risk infants and toddlers and provide training, education and consultation focused on mental health. KAIMH will also continue its work on a professional infant mental health endorsement for providers. KAIMH will collaborate with KACCRA and KQRS.
- KCSL HF: 8 additional families will be served.
- KHSA: 7 additional families (5 in-home and 2 site-based) will be served in Shawnee Mission Early Head Start
- KPTTA: Approximately 190 additional high-risk families will be served in four school districts: Blue Valley, Shawnee Mission, Gardner, and Olathe (De Soto and Spring Hill chose not to be included).
- KDEC: KDEC will address the goal of embedded inclusion throughout the infant/toddler system. KDEC will lead the training of all KELC partners to support them in providing screenings designed to enhance early identification of delay/disability. Infant Toddler Services Johnson County (ITSJC) will purchase equipment and provide audiological screenings. ITSJC will also provide evaluations by Dr. McCrorie when autism spectrum disorder is suspected.

This document was prepared by Marya Schott. Send comments or corrections to maryas@ucsjoco.org.

CONTACT INFORMATION

United Community Services of Johnson County

913-438-4764 www.ucsjoco.org

12351 West 96th Terrace, Suite 200, Lenexa, KS 66215