

# Kansas Office of Early Childhood

## Annual Report

*January 2026*



**January 20, 2026**

Dear Kansans:

We are honored to submit this report as required by House Bill 2045 and to share the progress made in establishing the Kansas Office of Early Childhood (KOEC). This is a pivotal moment for early childhood in Kansas—one that reflects the state's commitment to children, families, the early childhood workforce, and its communities.

We recognize that the decisions made now will shape outcomes in Kansas for generations to come. As such, we do not take lightly the charge set forth in HB 2045. Consolidating programs is a significant responsibility, and we approach this work with humility, urgency, and a dedication to excellence. At the same time, we view this responsibility as an opportunity to set the stage for better aligning systems, reducing fragmentation, improving access for families, and ensuring that early childhood programs and services are delivered with clarity, accountability, and impact to achieve the greatest returns on our state's investments.

Throughout the transition, we are committed to fulfilling the purpose outlined in HB 2045 and to ensuring that KOEC is efficient, effective, and responsive to the needs of Kansans. We know that this work will not happen overnight. To establish strong foundations, we are moving with intentionality, listening to stakeholders, and making early decisions that position the Office for long-term success.

This report outlines progress made toward fulfilling the statutory requirements of HB 2045 and, more broadly, toward establishing the Office, including early milestones, key decisions, and initial transition efforts. It also describes our outlook for the Office, its vision, and KOEC's priorities for its inaugural year. Finally, an accompanying Kansas Early Childhood Annual Report template provides a framework to share key data and insights on the status of the early childhood ecosystem on an annual basis moving forward.

We are grateful for the leadership from the Legislature and Governor in establishing KOEC. We look forward to continued collaboration and to building an Office that helps ensure every Kansas child, family, and community has the opportunity to thrive.

Sincerely,



**Christi Smith**  
Acting Director  
Kansas Office of Early Childhood



**Zach Vincent**  
Kansas Office of Early Childhood Transition Director  
Office of Governor Laura Kelly

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## Executive Summary

Kansas is home to nearly 180,000 children from birth to age five, or about 6% of the state's population.<sup>1</sup> The early experiences of this population shape long-term educational and economic outcomes that are critical to the future of Kansas. These children and their families engage with a wide range of early childhood services, such as child care, preschool, home visiting, maternal and pediatric care, and developmental supports. Public and private providers across the state deliver these services through a mixed-delivery system.

House Bill 2045 (HB 2045) established the Kansas Office of Early Childhood (KOEC) within the executive branch to improve transparency, coordination, and administrative efficiency across the state's early childhood system to better serve families and children. Previously, early childhood programs operated across multiple state agencies with varying eligibility rules, funding structures, data systems, and oversight. This fragmentation increased complexity for families and providers and reduced administrative efficiency. In recognition of this, in January 2023, the Bipartisan Policy Center ranked Kansas 49th nationally across all states and D.C. in early childhood system efficiency.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, demand for reliable early childhood services remains high, as 67% of Kansas children age five and under live in households where all available parents are in the workforce.<sup>3</sup>

This transition report outlines the initial phase of implementing HB 2045 and the state's approach to establishing KOEC while ensuring continuity of services for children, families, and providers. KOEC's early efforts focus on implementing governance changes by aligning administrative and operational functions, clarifying roles and accountability, and strengthening coordination among state agencies. These efforts do not alter program eligibility, service models, or quality standards, but set the stage for a more coordinated and effective system.

## Transition Overview

HB 2045 directs the transfer of over 20 early childhood programs, associated funding streams, and related administrative functions to KOEC. After a preliminary planning period, work to prepare the transition of programs began on January 1, 2026, with full integration of programs, staff, and operations required by July 1, 2026. At that point, as assigned by HB 2045, KOEC will also oversee responsibility for key system-level functions, including policy and funding

<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau, 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2024), Table DP05.

<sup>2</sup> Bipartisan Policy Center, *Integrated Efficient Early Care and Education Systems* (2023), <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/early-care-education-systems/>.

<sup>3</sup> First Five Years Fund, 2025 State Fact Sheet: *Child Care & Early Learning in Kansas* (2025), <https://www.ffyf.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025-Kansas-State-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

implementation, federal grant administration and reporting, performance measurement, data collection, annual legislative reporting, and interagency coordination.

HB 2045 created a clear staffing blueprint and operational capacity for the Office. The staffing and operational capacity will maintain continuity of services, preserve program expertise, and support coordinated, accountable administration across early childhood programs to create a more effective system. KOEC will have 88 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, most of which will transfer from the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF), the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), and the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund (KCCTF).

Once fully integrated, KOEC will oversee a consolidated early childhood budget that includes existing state and federal investments previously administered across multiple agencies. Current estimates, as reflected in the Governor's Budget Report, indicate an initial Office budget of roughly \$225 million beginning in State Fiscal Year 2027 (SFY27), primarily federal and state child care financial assistance and quality funding, home visiting program funding, and Children's Cabinet programs.<sup>4</sup>

## Transition Governance and Progress to Date

HB 2045 established a structured transition governance process to manage implementation and reduce risk to service continuity. An interagency transition team, led by the Office of Early Childhood Transition Director and composed of senior representatives from DCF, KDHE, KSDE, the Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, the Governor's Office, and key administrative partners, oversees implementation. In parallel, the Governor's Office convened an external KOEC Advisory Group to elevate stakeholder perspectives and provide consultation on early priorities for the newly established KOEC.

Since HB 2045's enactment, transition activities included immediate updates to rules and regulations as required by statute and have since progressed across five additional focus areas: field management and stakeholder engagement; executive management and legislative updates; transfer of personnel; transfer of funds; and transfer of programs. Key achievements include updating KDHE's child care licensing regulations to meet statutory requirements, conducting nearly 35 informational presentations and one-on-one conversations with statewide partners, convening Advisory Group meetings, maintaining regular communication with affected staff, and initiating cross-agency reviews of programs, statutes, and funding streams to support a phased

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<sup>4</sup> Kansas Division of the Budget, *FY 2027 Governor's Budget Report*, Vol. 2 (2026), p. 290.

and orderly transfer. This work has resulted in an initial purpose and vision statement for KOEC and recommendations for the Office's first year of implementation.

## **Recommendations for KOEC's Year One Priorities**

Based on transition planning, stakeholder input, and early implementation, this report presents four key recommendations to eliminate inefficiencies, reduce duplication, and ultimately strengthen efficacy, coordination, and accountability during KOEC's initial year. The KOEC Director makes these recommendations, drawing on the work of the interagency transition team, the Advisory Group, and the Governor's Office.

***Recommendation 1: KOEC should develop and begin implementing a plan to make more efficient use of resources by July 1, 2027.***

KOEC should create a resource-efficiency plan by reviewing its funding streams, including the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program (MIECHV), state-funded home visiting programs, Head Start coordination, and Children's Cabinet Trust fund dollars. Through this process, KOEC will identify opportunities to align all public dollars towards Office priorities and reduce fragmentation while maintaining legislative intent and adhering to federal requirements. KOEC should also plan the timing and sequencing of transitioning federal funding streams that require lead agency designation, taking into account fixed grant cycles and ongoing reporting and compliance obligations.

***Recommendation 2: KOEC should develop an operating structure that effectively organizes teams and workstreams and continue to improve this structure over time.***

Under the Director's authority in HB 2045 to organize the Office efficiently, KOEC should structure teams around core system functions rather than by isolated program or funding stream. Organizing by function, such as provider supports, policy, compliance, quality and workforce supports, data and accountability, and fiscal and administrative management, will strengthen internal coordination, reduce duplicative processes, and provide more consistent experiences for families and providers.

***Recommendation 3: KOEC should develop and begin implementing a strong programmatic strategic plan to unify field-facing systems and improve service delivery.***

KOEC should develop a strategic plan grounded in how families, providers, and partners experience the system. This work should begin with a comprehensive review of rules, regulations, and operational processes that shape licensing, payments, monitoring, and communication, with a focus on reducing redundancies and improving usability. The plan should also address family access and navigation, quality and continuous improvement, data and accountability, and workforce supports.

***Recommendation 4: KOEC should establish a foundation of trust with providers, families, policymakers, and other key partners through efficient, transparent communication.***

In its first year, the Office will need to build effective, efficient, and consistent ways to communicate with stakeholders, leverage its position as a centralizing entity, and streamline existing communication channels. KOEC should prioritize consistency and predictability of when, how, and why it communicates, as well as ensuring it provides consistent messaging tailored to different audiences. By demonstrating its ability to communicate effectively and predictably, KOEC can build trust with the field, with families, and with policymakers.

***Recommendation 5: KOEC should collaborate purposefully with other agencies to support the entire early childhood ecosystem.***

As funding and responsibilities transfer, KOEC will need structured coordination with legacy agencies, especially for federal awards where originating agencies may retain close-out responsibilities, reporting, and records management after grant periods end. KOEC should use interagency agreements to clarify roles for policy direction, grant administration, reporting, and compliance during and after the transition. As the state's public-facing coordinator for early childhood, KOEC should also work with agencies administering programs not transferring to the Office, such as state prekindergarten and early childhood special education, to align direction and coordinate reporting on cross-agency data and outcomes, as outlined in the reporting framework in Appendix B.

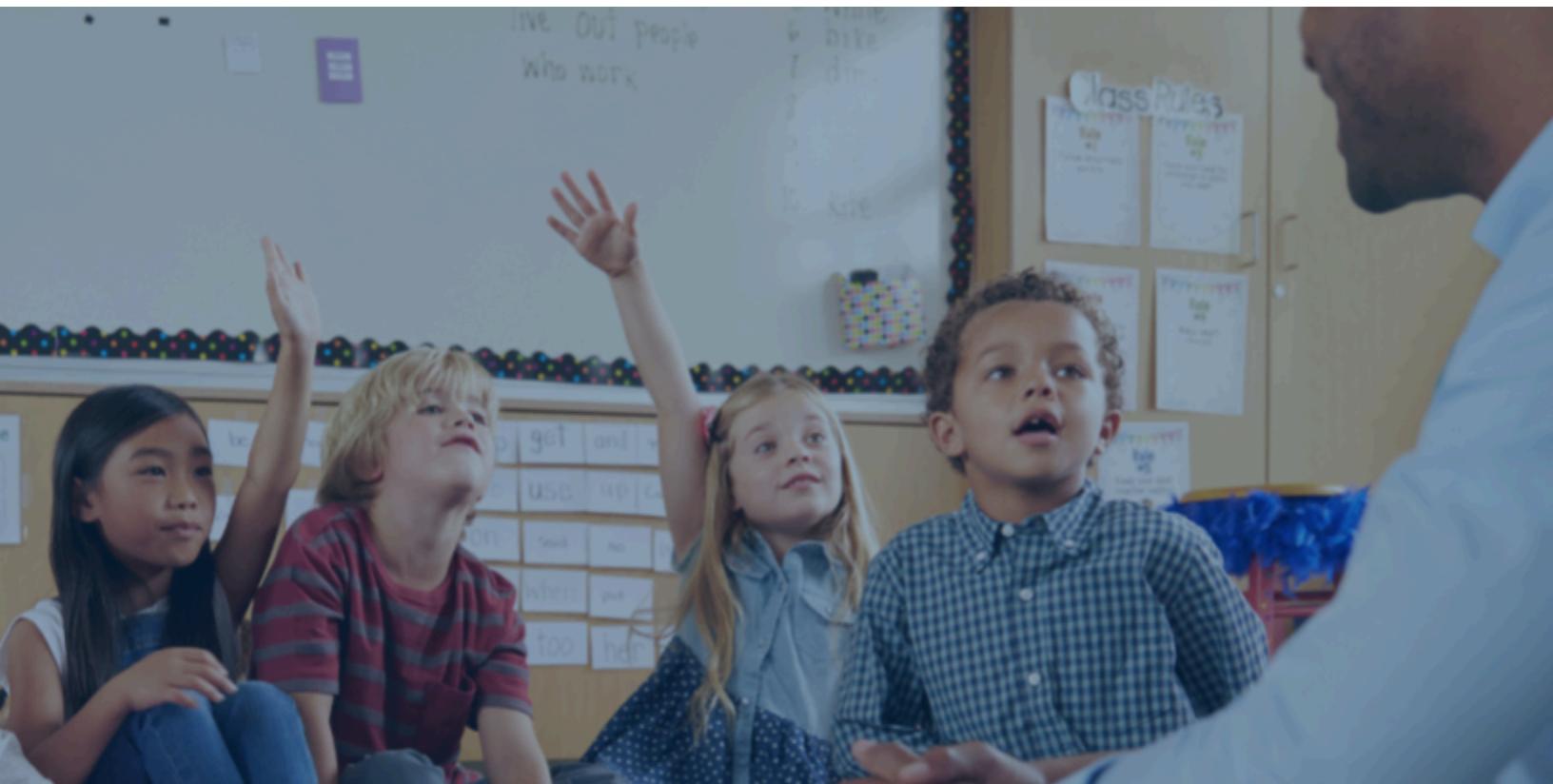


## Kansas Office of Early Childhood Purpose and Vision

**Purpose.** KOEC exists to strengthen early childhood systems by improving efficiency, transparency, and safety in state programs, funding, and policy implementation.

**Vision.** Kansas envisions an early childhood system in which:

- ★ **Every child** is supported and equipped with the foundations necessary for lifelong success.
- ★ **Families** have access to early childhood programs and services through a coordinated, easy-to-navigate system that reduces fragmentation & administrative burden.
- ★ **Providers** across a mixed-delivery system are supported, well-prepared, and have the resources necessary to deliver high-quality experiences for children.
- ★ **Businesses and communities** are strengthened through a coordinated approach that supports workforce participation and enables families to thrive.



## Overview of This Report

This report is submitted pursuant to House Bill 2045 (2025), Section 8, which requires the Director of the Kansas Office of Early Childhood to provide an annual report to the Legislature regarding the transition and administration of early childhood programs and funds (see Figure 1 for requirements). This inaugural report documents additional information on the transition efforts. Future annual reports will build upon this foundation to provide increasingly comprehensive information on outcomes, system performance, and progress toward statutory goals.

**Figure 1. Compliance with HB 2045 Annual Reporting Requirements**

Statutory Reporting Requirements	Met?	Descriptions
(1) The allocation and expenditure of funds and resources	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Included: Description of funding streams transferred to the Kansas Office of Early Childhood, consolidated budget estimates, and fiscal oversight responsibilities.</li> </ul>
(2) Measurable outcomes of programs funded through the Office	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Included: The Annual Report template (Appendix B) outlines how KOEC will meet this requirement in the future.</li> <li>Limitation: Since KOEC does not yet exist, there is limited availability of comprehensive, cross-program outcome and complaint data due to data system fragmentation and the timing of program transfers.</li> </ul>
(3) Identified inefficiencies within the Office and system and the corrective action taken in response	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Included: Identification of inefficiencies related to contracting, data, field operations, and administrative duplication, along with corrective actions underway.</li> </ul>
(4) Recommendations for improving fiscal stewardship, service delivery, implementation of statutory requirements, and any potential changes	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Included: Recommendations addressing fiscal stewardship, service delivery, and implementation of statutory responsibilities, consistent with authority provided in HB 2045.</li> </ul>
(5) Updates on changes to rules and regulations	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Included: Documentation of required licensing regulation updates, timelines, and statutory compliance.</li> </ul>
(6) All data and metrics related to programs, workforce, service delivery, and fiscal efficiency of all programs and recommendations for continuation or termination of such programs	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Included: Initial program-level and system-level data and identification of key metrics. The Annual Report template (Appendix B) outlines how KOEC will meet this requirement in the future.</li> <li>Limitation: There are limited system-wide service rate, workforce, and fiscal efficiency metrics during the transition due to incomplete data integration across legacy agencies. KOEC will address this limitation in future years through the Annual Report template (Appendix B).</li> </ul>
(7) Any pilot program and findings	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not applicable. No pilot programs were authorized or implemented by KOEC during the reporting period covered by this inaugural report.</li> </ul>



## Background & Context

Bipartisan leaders in Kansas have prioritized developing a more effective early childhood system, recognizing that affordable, high-quality services support family stability, workforce participation, and children's long-term success. Kansas' publicly-funded early care and education system serves tens of thousands of children each year through child care assistance, preschool, home visiting, early intervention, and Head Start programs (see Figure 2 for current scale).

**Figure 2. Approximate Number of Children Served Birth to Five<sup>5</sup>**

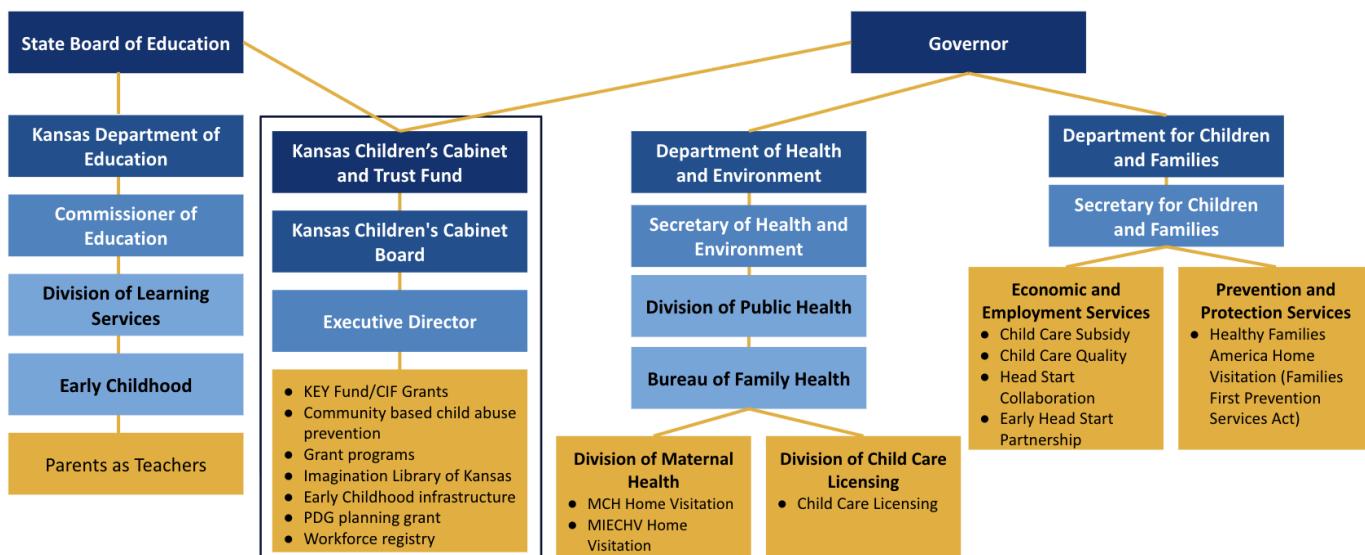
Child Care Assistance	<b>15,920</b> (SFY 25)
Preschool services	<b>24,805</b> (SFY 25)
Home visiting programs	<b>9,783</b> (SFY 24)
IDEA Part C early intervention	<b>11,609</b> (SFY 24)
Head Start/Early Head Start	<b>6,824</b> (SFY 25)

For years, multiple agencies have administered early childhood programs with differing eligibility rules, funding structures, data systems, and oversight requirements (see Figure 3). While existing agencies address this fragmentation through informal coordination, the longstanding governance structure for early childhood education is inefficient and creates unnecessary complexity for families and providers. As a result, Kansas ranked 49th nationally, across all states and DC, in early childhood system efficiency, according to the Bipartisan Policy Center's January 2023 published analysis.<sup>6</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Sources for service data: Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust, *Child Care Data Request* (Aggregate Data, 2025); KSDE, *Administrative Data Request* (2025); KDCF, *Administrative Data Request* (2025); Kansas Children's Cabinet, *ECIDS Dashboard* (2024).

<sup>6</sup> Bipartisan Policy Center, *Integrated Efficient Early Care and Education Systems* (2023).

**Figure 3. Legacy Early Childhood Governance Structure (Pre-July 2026)**

## Historic Fragmentation

Kansas' early childhood system has historically operated across multiple agencies and programs, creating complexity for families, providers, and the state.

Key indicators of system performance and family need reflect these challenges:

- 67% of Kansas children ages five and under live in households where all available parents are in the workforce, increasing the need for timely, coordinated access to early childhood services.<sup>7</sup>
- The supply of child care across the state is insufficient, with a gap of 38% between the supply of child care compared to the potential need.<sup>8</sup>
- The long-term economic impact of insufficient and inefficient child care systems in Kansas is estimated at \$2.5-3.8 billion.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> First Five Years Fund, 2025 State Fact Sheet: *Child Care & Early Learning in Kansas* (2025).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

For the 150,000 working families raising children under 5 across Kansas,<sup>10</sup> this fragmentation directly shapes their experience of the early childhood system. Parents seeking care or support for their children must navigate multiple programs—child care subsidy, home visiting, early intervention, Head Start, and preschool—each with its own eligibility rules, application processes, documentation requirements, and points of entry. With the majority of Kansas children age five and under living in households where all available parents are in the workforce, families often manage this complexity while balancing work and caregiving responsibilities. Rather than accessing services through a coordinated system, families often must figure out which programs meet their needs and how to apply for each one separately, delaying access and increasing confusion.

For providers delivering publicly-funded early childhood services in the state, this fragmentation shapes daily operations and administrative capacity. Many of the state's providers interact with multiple state agencies for licensing, monitoring, reporting, and contracting, each with distinct requirements, timelines, and oversight structures. In the absence of a single, clearly accountable authority, providers often must manage overlapping or duplicative processes, including repeated inspections, reporting, and compliance steps, even when serving the same children and families. This administrative burden reduces efficiency and diverts staff time and resources away from direct services.

The Final Report of the Early Childhood Transition Task Force, completed in 2023, highlighted these realities in its rationale for creating a more efficient governance structure for early childhood in the state.<sup>11</sup> Through input from over 500 families, providers, and stakeholders statewide, the Task Force identified consistent concerns about navigating multiple programs with varying rules, applications, and contact points. Families reported confusion about where to begin, inconsistent eligibility requirements, and delays in accessing services. Providers noted duplicative administrative processes, staffing shortages, and limited capacity to expand or sustain services. Participants across sessions stressed the lack of a clear, accountable entity to align programs and simplify access. This feedback directly informed the Task Force's recommendation to unify coordination and oversight of early childhood programs in Kansas.

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<sup>10</sup> Child Care Aware of Kansas, "Kansas State Point-In-Time Child Care Data," presented to the Kansas House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development, January 18, 2023,

[https://kslegislature.gov/li/b2023\\_24/committees/ctte\\_h\\_cmrc/lbr\\_1/documents/testimony/20230118\\_03.pdf](https://kslegislature.gov/li/b2023_24/committees/ctte_h_cmrc/lbr_1/documents/testimony/20230118_03.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Governor's Early Childhood Transition Task Force, *Final Report of the Early Childhood Transition Task Force* (2023),

<https://www.governor.ks.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/346/638571059704300000>.

House Bill 2045 addresses this recommendation for governance change based on these longstanding structural challenges by establishing a single office to coordinate early childhood programs.<sup>12</sup> By establishing the Kansas Office of Early Childhood (KOEC), the state has created the capacity to support a vision for early childhood, alongside simplifying how families access services, reducing duplicative administrative requirements for providers, strengthening accountability for public investments, and preparing the more than 31,000 children who enter kindergarten in Kansas each year.<sup>13</sup> Rather than introducing new programs or standards, HB 2045 consolidates coordination, oversight, and administrative functions to support more efficient operations and a more coherent early childhood system.

## Overview of House Bill 2045

During the 2025 Legislative Session, the Kansas Legislature passed House Bill 2045 with bipartisan support, which was subsequently signed by Governor Laura Kelly, formally establishing the Kansas Office of Early Childhood (KOEC) within the executive branch. The legislation reflects extensive analysis, stakeholder engagement, and recommendations from the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force, informed by lessons learned from other states that have unified early childhood governance.

HB 2045 authorizes the Governor to appoint a Director of Early Childhood, subject to Senate confirmation, and assigns the Director responsibility for overseeing designated early childhood programs, budgets, and operational functions transferred to the Office. The legislation establishes KOEC as the state's central point of accountability for early childhood coordination while preserving the underlying purposes and statutory authorities of existing programs. With this framework in place, the KOEC can spend its early years focusing on operationalizing these governance changes to reduce fragmentation, clarify accountability, and support families and providers without disrupting services.

## Early Focus of the Office

In its initial years, the Kansas Office of Early Childhood will focus on building the foundational structures for coordinated, accountable operations while ensuring the continuity of services for children, families, and providers. Early efforts will align administrative and operational functions across transferred programs, clarify roles and accountability, and strengthen coordination among state agencies. KOEC will prioritize improving system operations, including streamlining oversight,

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<sup>12</sup> Kansas Legislature, House Bill 2045 (2025), [https://www.kslegislature.gov/li/b2025\\_26/measures/hb2045/](https://www.kslegislature.gov/li/b2025_26/measures/hb2045/).

<sup>13</sup> Kansas Dept. of Education, *Headcount Enrollment (Unaudited)*, 2024-2025.

reducing duplicative administrative processes, and enhancing communication with families and providers.

KOEC is responsible for prioritizing the following during its initial years of existence:

- Coordinating early childhood programs and functions across child care, early learning, home visiting, and related services,
- Aligning oversight, funding administration, and accountability structures to reduce fragmentation,
- Supporting clearer navigation and communication for families and more consistent expectations for providers, and
- Strengthening coordination across state agencies to ensure ongoing collaboration with other related state programs and services (e.g., KDHE's maternal and child health team, KSDE's PreK and K-12 teams)

This early focus reflects the Legislature's intent to address long-standing inefficiencies in system design without increasing regulatory and administrative burdens.

## **Long-Term Vision**

Over time, KOEC will administer a more coordinated, transparent, and responsive early childhood system to better serve children, families, communities, and businesses across Kansas. A more unified governance structure enables families to understand and access services more easily, allows providers to operate within more transparent and consistent administrative systems, and supports stronger alignment across state agencies.

This vision recognizes the essential role of early childhood services in supporting the state's workforce and economy. Reliable access to safe, high-quality care enables parents to work, helps employers attract and retain workers, and contributes to community stability statewide.

Achieving this vision will require sustained effort over multiple years. Establishing KOEC provides the foundation for continuous system improvement by creating clearer accountability, strengthening coordination, and improving the effective use of public resources over time.

## Implementing the Transition to KOEC

The establishment of the Kansas Office of Early Childhood (KOEC) reflects a deliberate, multi-year process grounded in research, stakeholder engagement, and phased statutory implementation.

### Programs and Functions Transitioning to KOEC

HB 2045 directs the transfer of approximately 20 programs to the new Office to improve coordination, transparency, and efficiency across the early childhood system while maintaining service continuity for children, families, and providers. After a preliminary planning period, work to transition programs began on January 1, 2026, with full integration of programs, staff, and operations required by July 1, 2026. These programs are currently administered by the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF), the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), and the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund (KCCTF), as detailed in Figure 4.

**Figure 4. Early Childhood Programs Transitioning to KOEC and Remaining at Current Agencies**

	Programs moving into KOEC:	Programs remaining in their current agency:
<b>Department for Children and Families (DCF)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Care Subsidy (CCDF), including policy, administration, subsidy, and quality of the program</li> <li>Child Care Quality</li> <li>Head Start Collaboration Office (KHSCO)</li> <li>Kansas Early Head Start Child Care Partnership (KEHS-CCP)</li> <li>Kansas Early Head Start Home Visitation (KEHS-HV)</li> <li>Healthy Families America Home Visiting (HFA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Care Subsidy Enrollment, Eligibility, and Payments</li> </ul>
<b>Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Care Licensing</li> <li>Maternal and Child Health Universal Home Visiting</li> <li>Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visitation (MIECHV)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IDEA Part C (Infant &amp; Toddlers Services)</li> <li>Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)</li> </ul>

	<b>Programs moving into KOEC:</b>	<b>Programs remaining in their current agency:</b>
<b>Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents as Teachers (PAT)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-K</li> <li>Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)</li> </ul>
<b>Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund (KCCTF)</b>	<i>All programs moving to KOEC</i>	

Each of these programs has an associated funding stream that will also transfer to the KOEC. In addition to specific program and funding transfers, HB 2045 assigns KOEC responsibility for a range of system-level and administrative functions necessary to support effective governance and accountability, including:

- Implementation of early childhood policies, processes, and funding
- Federal grant administration and reporting related to transferred programs
- Performance measurement, data collection, and annual legislative reporting
- Interagency coordination related to early childhood services
- Transfer of staff, contracts, records, property, and unexpended funds associated with identified programs

For a complete description of the programs and functions transitioning, see Appendix A.

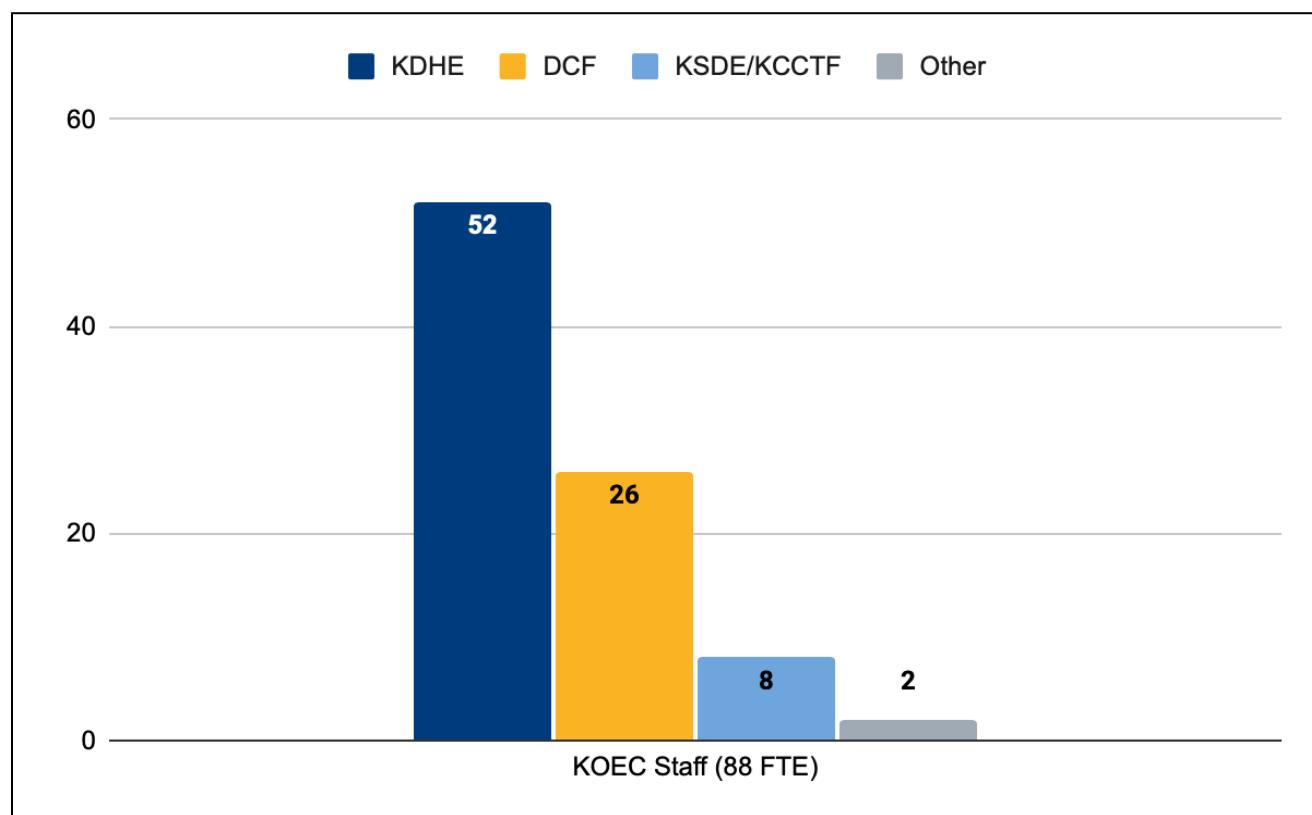
## KOEC Staffing and Operational Capacity

KOEC will leverage existing staffing and operational capacity in the state. This transition minimizes the need for new resources, ensures continuity of services, and supports coordinated, accountable administration across early childhood programs to create a more effective system.

KOEC will have 88 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, the vast majority of which will transfer from existing state agencies that currently administer early childhood programs primarily funded through federal or special revenue sources. This approach preserves institutional knowledge, program expertise, and relationships with families and providers, while enabling more centralized operations within a single office. Staff will transition from the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF), the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), and the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE)/Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund (KCCTF) (see Figure 5).

Two positions associated with the establishment of the Office do not come from existing state agencies. The Director of Early Childhood is created through the transfer of a position from the Governor's Office. This position is appointed by the Governor and is subject to Senate confirmation. The Director serves as the Office's public-facing leader, providing strategic and operational oversight to ensure execution of KOEC's mission and accountability for its outcomes. In addition, HB 2045 authorized one new position, a Child Care Ombudsman, who will support families and providers by providing guidance and resolving problems related to child care services administered by KOEC. The Governor's Budget Report formally requested funding and staffing authority for these positions.<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 5. Staff Transitioning to KOEC, by Original Agency**

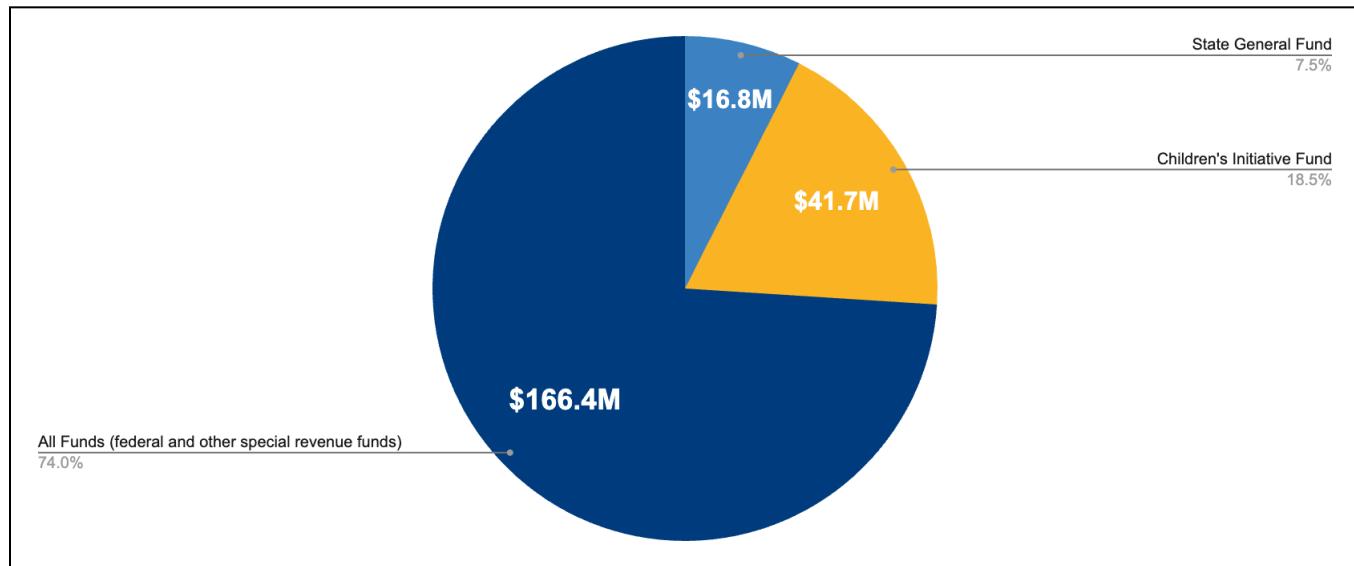


KOEC will be located on the third floor of the Docking State Office Building, allowing staff from multiple programs and legacy agencies to operate under one roof. This reinforces KOEC's role as a centralized point of accountability while efficiently utilizing existing state facilities. It also allows for proximity to the Department of Commerce, fostering collaboration on the state's economic development goals.

<sup>14</sup> Kansas Division of the Budget, *FY 2027 Governor's Budget Report*, Vol. 2 (2026), p. 290.

Once fully integrated, KOEC will oversee a consolidated early childhood budget reflecting existing state and federal investments previously administered across multiple agencies. For SFY27, the Governor recommended a total "reportable budget" of \$224.9 million, primarily consisting of federal and state funding for child care financial assistance and quality funding, home visiting programs, and Children's Cabinet programs.<sup>15</sup> This includes \$152.8 million for the Child Care Division, \$32.3 million for the Home Visiting Division, and \$36.0 million for Children's Cabinet programs. These funds support services delivered statewide and do not represent new appropriations or program expansions. Figure 6 summarizes the approximate distribution of early childhood funding administered by KOEC by source once consolidation is complete.

**Figure 6. KOEC Total Funding by Source**



<sup>15</sup> Kansas Division of the Budget, *FY 2027 Governor's Budget Report*, Vol. 1 (2026), p. 43.

The Governor's recommendation also includes \$1.3 million in funding, all from the State General Fund, for operational costs not included in the transfer from other agencies (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7. Governor Recommended KOEC Operational Costs Not Transferring from Other Agencies**

The salary and benefits for the Director of the Early Childhood	\$208,000
The salary and benefits for the Child Care Ombudsman, as created by 2025 HB 2045	\$92,872
Human resource services through the Department of Administration	\$25,000
Website hosting and maintenance	\$30,250
Office space	\$205,000
Costs associated with the fiscal note of 2025 HB 2045, all other general operations, and overhead costs associated with the transition to the new Office	\$750,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1.3M</b>

Additionally, the Governor recommends that all reappropriations from funding associated with the KOEC transition, particularly funds from the Children's Initiative Fund, continue to ensure maximum flexibility and address possible unaccounted-for costs associated with the establishment of the agency.

In SFY26, the Governor also recommended supplemental funding for the Director's salary for the current fiscal year. The Governor's Office Budget included this request, given that the Office is not yet fully functional.

## Transition Timeline and Key Milestones

The timeline below highlights major milestones from the Governor's initial charge to study early childhood governance in 2023 through full program integration and KOEC's first post-transition legislative reporting.

**JAN 2023**

**Executive Order 23-01 to create an Early Childhood Transition Task Force.**

Governor Kelly created the Early Childhood Transition Task Force, charged with conducting an analysis of the existing early childhood system, engaging stakeholders, and making recommendations to transition to a more efficient operating structure.

**DEC 2023**

**Final Report of the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force.** The Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force was convened in January 2023 to study early childhood governance and engage stakeholders statewide. After a year of analysis and public input, the Task Force delivered a final report in December 2023 that informed the governance framework ultimately enacted through HB 2045.

**FEB-APR 2024**

**Introduced Legislation to Establish KOEC.** Legislation was introduced to establish the Kansas Office of Early Childhood. Governor Kelly collaborated with legislators to refine the bill and create a more comprehensive piece of legislation that was intended to streamline regulatory structures, establish the agency, and cut costs for providers and working families. The legislation did not pass both chambers before the end of the 2024 legislative session.

**JAN-APR 2025**

**Enacted Legislation.** Governor Kelly and a bipartisan group of legislators reintroduced the legislation from the previous session. After significant bipartisan collaboration, HB 2045 passed the Kansas House of Representatives 93-23 and the Kansas Senate 30-10. Governor Kelly signed the legislation on April 24, 2025, at the Kansas Children's Discovery Center in Topeka, KS.

**JUL-DEC 2025**

**Transition Director Appointed and Interagency Team Convened.** Following the enactment of HB 2045, the Governor appointed a KOEC Transition Director, Zach Vincent, and an interagency transition team to manage the transition to the Kansas Office of Early Childhood. The team coordinated with affected agencies to begin executing the phased transfer of programs, staff, funds, and systems while maintaining service continuity.

DEC 2025-  
JUL 2026

**Transition Advisory Group.** The Governor's Office convened an external Advisory Group composed of providers, parents, advocates, and other stakeholders to provide input on implementation and early priorities. The Advisory Group serves in a consultative capacity.

DEC 18, 2025

**Director Appointment.** Governor Laura Kelly appointed Christi Smith as the inaugural Director of KOEC to lead the transition to the new Office and guide KOEC as it launches on July 1, 2026.

JAN 20, 2026

**Submission of KOEC Inaugural Annual Report.** Kansas' transition plan and first annual report (as submitted here) is due to the legislature.

JAN 2026 -  
JUL 2026

**Transition of Programs.** The statute requires programs to begin transitioning by January 1, 2026, with full integration completed by July 1, 2026.

JUL 1, 2026

**Consolidation Complete.** All designated programs will integrate into KOEC, including the transfer of staff, funds, contracts, and administrative authority, such that KOEC is fully operational and solely accountable for program administration and legislative reporting.

JAN 2027

**Annual Report Detailing Progress to Date.** In January 2027, KOEC will release its first post-transition Annual Report, establishing a baseline for ongoing oversight using a standardized reporting framework.

## Governance and Oversight During the Transition

To manage the multi-step process of establishing the new Office while maintaining uninterrupted services, HB 2045 created a transition process with clear implementation authority, accountability, and structure. This work is now underway with an Office of Early Childhood Transition Director, an interagency transition team, the appointed Director of Early Childhood, and an Advisory Group comprised of external stakeholders.

### ***Interagency Transition Team***

Following the enactment of HB 2045, Governor Laura Kelly appointed an interagency transition team to oversee implementation, coordinate across agencies, and manage operational risk during the transition period. Led by the KOEC Transition Director, Zach Vincent, this team includes senior representatives from the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF), Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, and the Governor's Office. Figure 8 outlines the team's complete membership.

**Figure 8. Interagency Transition Team Membership**

Agency	Name	Role
Governor's Office	Zach Vincent	Office of Early Childhood Transition Director; Director of Governmental Affairs - Education Policy
Governor's Office	Kate Davis	Deputy Chief of Staff for Cabinet Affairs
Kansas Department of Administration	Adam Proffitt	Secretary and Director of Budget
Kansas Department of Administration	Samir Arif	Chief of Staff
Kansas Department of Administration	Lynette Bakker	Attorney
Kansas Division of Budget	Jen Ordiway	Budget Analyst
Kansas Office of Information Technology Services	Jeff Maxon	Chief Information Technology Officer

Agency	Name	Role
Kansas Department for Children and Families	Laura Howard	Secretary
Kansas Department for Children and Families	Carla Whiteside-Hicks	Economic and Employment Services Director
Kansas Department for Children and Families	Tammy Tompkins	Director of Budget
Kansas Department of Health and Environment	Janet Stanek	Secretary
Kansas Department of Health and Environment	Ashley Goss	Deputy Secretary
Kansas Department of Health and Environment	Derik Flerlage	Bureau Director
Kansas Department of Health and Environment	Amy Penrod	Director
Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund	Melissa Rooker	Director
Kansas Department of Education	Amanda Petersen	Director of Early Childhood
Kansas Department of Education	John Hess	Director of Fiscal Services and Operations

### ***Roles and Responsibilities of the Interagency Transition Team***

The Interagency Transition Team is responsible for executing the statutory transition plan, ensuring continuity of services, and meeting all legal, fiscal, and operational deadlines required to establish KOEC. Specifically, this team seeks to accomplish the following:

- **Developing and executing a phased transition plan** aligned to statutory deadlines, including the January 1, 2026, transition start date and the July 1, 2026, full integration deadline.
- **Coordinating across affected state agencies** to sequence the transfer of programs, staff, funds, contracts, and administrative authority into the Office of Early Childhood.

- **Identifying and mitigating operational risks** related to service continuity, payroll, contracting, federal compliance, and program oversight during the transition period.
- **Overseeing staff transition planning**, including position inventories, reporting structures, supervision plans, and coordination with human resources and labor requirements.
- **Managing fiscal and budget-related transition activities**, including alignment of appropriations, transfer of funds and accounts, and coordination with statewide fiscal controls.
- **Coordinating contract transitions**, including novation, continuation, or reissuance of contracts to ensure uninterrupted service delivery.
- **Supporting alignment of core operational systems**, such as budgeting, procurement, human resources, data governance, and reporting processes.
- **Ensuring continuity of services** for children, families, and providers throughout the transition, with no interruption to eligibility, service models, or statutory program requirements.
- **Providing regular updates to executive leadership** and supporting transparency regarding transition progress and implementation challenges.

The transition team is distinct from advisory or stakeholder groups and holds only implementation responsibility; it does not establish policy, create new program standards, or serve as an ongoing governance body.



### ***Transition Leadership Roles***

To ensure a comprehensive approach to transition oversight and the establishment of KOEC, the Governor's Office is leveraging two roles. The KOEC Transition Director and the Director of Early Childhood will work together to serve as a resource to partners throughout the transition, including, but not limited to, legislators, legislative committees, transitioning staff, and the Interagency Transition team. Figure 9 further outlines the leadership responsibilities of these roles.

***Figure 9. Delineated Roles of Leadership in the KOEC Transition Process***

Role	Transition Director	Director of Early Childhood
Incumbent	Zach Vincent	Christi Smith
Purpose of Position	The KOEC Transition Director oversees the day-to-day implementation of House Bill 2045 and the formal establishment of the KOEC.	The Director will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the Office once established.
Transition Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading the interagency implementation team</li> <li>• Managing partnerships and ensuring achievement of deliverables</li> <li>• Ensuring alignment with statutory requirements</li> <li>• Overseeing internal staff engagement, including providing transition updates and leading cross-agency check-ins</li> <li>• Serving as the point-person for policymakers</li> <li>• Overseeing the KOEC Director onboarding plan</li> <li>• Ensuring alignment of major communication and public updates regarding the transition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Own early childhood content and policy expertise; shape KOEC's priorities, vision, and mission</li> <li>• Elevate implementation risks or opportunities for impact</li> <li>• Meet with current staff to establish a shared culture and collective buy-in</li> <li>• Provide input and context in decision-making; implement decisions within KOEC</li> <li>• Review and provide feedback on communication with the field; ensure clarity and practicality for families, providers, and partners</li> </ul>

### **KOEC External Advisory Group**

In parallel with formal transition activities, the Governor's Office convened an external Advisory Group to gather stakeholder input during the transition and early implementation period. The Advisory Group ensures field perspectives inform implementation decisions. Statutory authority and operational responsibility remain with KOEC leadership.

The Advisory Group includes representatives from child care providers, home visiting programs, parents, advocates, and business and regional leaders. Membership is structured to reflect geographic, programmatic, and community diversity across Kansas. Figure 10 outlines a complete list of the Advisory Group's membership at the time of publication.

**Figure 10. KOEC Advisory Group Membership**

Name	Organization	Role
Jennifer Bruning	Kansas YMCAs	Executive Director
Kami Cohorst	Child Care Aware of Kansas	Interim Executive Director
Gail Cozadd	Kansas Children's Service League	CEO
Joyce Glasscock	Kansas Boys and Girls Clubs	Executive Director
Laura Gunderson	Child Care Providers Coalition of Kansas	President
David Jordan	United Methodist Health Ministry Fund	President
Hilary Koehn	Kansas PAT Association	Executive Director
Drew Mitrisin	Parent Representative/Overland Park City Council	Parent & Member
Monica Murnan	Greenbush	Director of Center & Community Supports
Paula Neth	Futures First	President & CEO
Heather Schrotberger	Kansas Head Start Association	Executive Director
Cornelia Stevens	TOP Early Learning Centers	Executive Director
Sarah Wasinger	Hays Chamber of Commerce	President & CEO

The group focuses on elevating stakeholder perspectives, identifying potential implementation impacts, and informing KOEC's early priorities. The group provides input on key policy issues the Office will address during the transition. As of the time of this report, the Advisory Group has provided preliminary consultation to transition leadership on how they can best support KOEC, identifying key areas for engagement.

## Progress to Date on Key Focus Areas

Since the enactment of HB 2045, transition activities have focused on establishing early accountability, transparency, and operational readiness to support the launch of the Kansas Office of Early Childhood. To date, the Interagency Transition Team has taken required steps to fulfill legislative requirements for immediate rules and regulations changes. These included updating and promulgating child care licensing regulations through KDHE, such as the licensed capacity tables, the threshold for the number of children served to require licensure, provider professional qualifications, and provider continuing education requirements. Under the provisions of HB 2045, these regulations will transfer to KOEC beginning on July 1, 2026.

The following timeline represents the progress of these regulations through the multi-agency review process:

**AUG 22, 2025**

KDHE approved regulations and sent them to the Department of Administration for review

**SEP 23, 2025**

Department of Administration approved and stamped the regulations

**SEP 24, 2025**

The Office of the Attorney General provided regulation packets for approval. Discussions and revisions based on feedback are ongoing.

**OCT 1, 2025**

KDHE complied with the statutory requirement to promulgate these regulations

Beyond fulfilling these requirements, the transition efforts have unfolded across three phases:

<b>Phase 1: Landscape Analysis (SEP - OCT 2025)</b>	A comprehensive analysis was conducted to develop a shared understanding of the current state and identify the assets, risks, and opportunities associated with the transition.
<b>Phase 2: Transition Work Plan (NOV 2025 - JAN 2026)</b>	A tailored, actionable set of recommendations and plans for a successful transition is being finalized.
<b>Phase 3: Implementation (FEB - JUL 2026)</b>	Project management and implementation of the work plan and actions needed for a successful transition.

Throughout all of these phases, the Transition team has advanced work across five key focus areas, summarized in Figure 11.

**Figure 11. Transition Focus Areas and Progress to Date**

Key Focus Area	Purpose	Progress as of January 2026
<b>Field Management</b>	Engage families, providers, and stakeholders by providing opportunities to learn about the transition and offer input to inform implementation and early priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviewed key external partners</li> <li>Convened and hosted two Advisory Group meetings</li> <li>Conducted nearly 35 informational presentations statewide to share transition updates and gather input</li> </ul>
<b>Executive Management</b>	Provide executive direction, oversight, and accountability to guide the transition and ensure alignment with legislative intent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appointed inaugural KOEC Director Christi Smith</li> <li>Supported ongoing coordination among the Governor's Office, KOEC leadership, and the Legislature</li> <li>Invited key legislators to one-on-one meetings to discuss the transition</li> <li>Provided testimony on transition progress to the Legislative Budget Committee on January 6, 2026, and the Senate Ways and</li> </ul>

Key Focus Area	Purpose	Progress as of January 2026
		Means Committee on January 15, 2026 during the initial weeks of the 2026 legislative session
<b>Transfer of People</b>	Prepare for staff transfers by supporting clear communication, operational continuity, and effective organizational planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hosted monthly touchpoints with affected staff beginning in October 2025, including manager meetings, team meetings, and town hall-style sessions</li> <li>Developed preliminary recommendations to structure the Office to support coordinated operations</li> <li>Developed updated job descriptions for the Office's leadership positions</li> <li>Sent regular updates to affected staff on the Office transition, along with maintaining an FAQ document</li> <li>Developed a survey for affected staff to collect questions and input</li> </ul>
<b>Transfer of Money</b>	Align funding streams and fiscal authority to support an orderly transition while maintaining fiscal integrity and maximizing existing resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed a review of funding streams associated with programs transitioning to KOEC</li> <li>Developed priority considerations for inclusion in the Governor's Budget Report for State Fiscal Year 2027</li> <li>Drafted recommendations for the transfer of grants and funding to the new Office and for the long-term sustainability of programs</li> </ul>
<b>Transfer of Programs</b>	Position programs for phased transfer by identifying opportunities to improve coordination and reduce duplication across early childhood services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducted a landscape analysis to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current system</li> <li>Conducted reviews of programs and relevant statutes</li> <li>Completed interviews with key program leadership to inform transition planning and operational alignment</li> </ul>



## Identified Inefficiencies in the Current System

During the transition process, as inefficiencies have been identified, action has been taken to address them, including:

### 1. Contracting and Resource Efficiency:

- Reviews are underway to reduce duplicative and overlapping contracts across programs and agencies to maximize funding and improve oversight.
- Provider contracting delays identified in legacy agencies; KOEC will assume centralized management to improve the timeliness of contracting and fund disbursement.

### 2. Unification of Field-Facing Operations Systems:

- Licensing survey functions have already been reorganized at KDHE to improve consistency and streamline internal management, which will carry over to KOEC.
- Field-facing teams (licensing, enrollment, program integrity) are being assessed for alignment and cross-training to create a more unified provider and family experience.

### 3. Systems Modernization:

- Identification of the need for a new licensing portal to integrate provider licensure and subsidy enrollment into a single workflow.
- Identification of where automation will replace manual provider communications and reduce administrative burden once communications transition to KOEC.

### 4. State Workforce Optimization:

- Following staff reviews, certain vacant FTE will lapse, resulting in a reduction of unnecessary FTE.
- KOEC will provide an opportunity for staff to be in one location, increasing internal communication and data sharing, accelerating decision-making, and enabling more timely, consistent field-facing communication.

## 5. Data Quality and Availability:

- Data cannot currently identify duplication of services for children and families, making understanding the full impact of ECE programs or any redundant service delivery impossible. This gap indicates that, to compare data and use it effectively, KOEC will need to align to the best extent possible Kansas' program reporting.
- In the process of developing future Annual Reports (see Appendix B), KOEC will prioritize efforts to streamline and integrate data so that stakeholders can make data-informed decisions as well as understand the reach and impact of programs.

## 6. Communications:

- Research, such as the 2024 Kansas Early Childhood System Needs Assessment, and stakeholder engagement have consistently identified communication as being fragmented, duplicative, and difficult to navigate across early childhood programs.<sup>16</sup> Through aligning program staffing and examining regulations, the new Office will also align messages to reduce duplicative communication and confusion among stakeholders.



<sup>16</sup> Kansas Children's Cabinet, 2024 Needs Assessment (2024).  
<https://kschildrenscabinet.gov/project/2024-needs-assessment/>.

## Recommendations for KOEC's Year One Priorities

Building on transition planning, identified inefficiencies (outlined above), stakeholder input, and early implementation work, the following recommendations outline priority actions to strengthen efficiency, coordination, and accountability during KOEC's first year. These recommendations are made by the KOEC Director based on the work of the transition team, the Advisory Group, and the Governor's Office, specifically.

***Recommendation 1: KOEC should develop and begin implementing a plan to make more efficient use of resources by July 1, 2027.***

HB 2045 places designated early childhood funding streams under the Kansas Office of Early Childhood, enabling a review of fund distribution and a more strategic use across programs and populations. This recommendation aims to improve administrative alignment and coordination without altering program eligibility, service models, or statutory purposes. KOEC should develop a resource-efficiency plan by reviewing all funding streams under its authority, including the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV), state-funded home visiting programs, and Head Start coordination, to identify opportunities for better resource distribution and administrative alignment.

KOEC should review early childhood budgets to better align resources, reduce fragmentation, and improve administrative efficiency, while still meeting legislative intent and federal requirements.

After this review, KOEC should be able to:

- Assess whether budgets and funding policies align with priorities and avoid funding programs that do not fit or are ineffective
- Identify and streamline any overlap or duplication in funding and administrative tasks for improved efficiency
- Work with other agencies that serve children and families to plan budgets and resources for programs not housed at KOEC

KOEC should address the requirements of federal funding streams that require a lead agency designation, such as CCDF and MIECHV. Since these programs follow fixed grant cycles with ongoing reporting and compliance obligations, administrative responsibilities must be carefully timed and sequenced to maintain service continuity and federal compliance.

***Recommendation 2: KOEC should develop an operating structure that effectively organizes teams and workstreams and continue to improve this structure over time.***

Transparent governance, internal structures, and operational processes are essential for KOEC's long-term effectiveness. In its first year, KOEC should focus on building an organizational structure that defines roles and responsibilities, promotes transparency, and ensures accountability. A well-designed structure will reduce silos, strengthen coordination, and improve the experience for families and providers, in line with legislative intent.

HB 2045 authorizes the Director of the Kansas Office of Early Childhood to organize the Office efficiently to fulfill its statutory responsibilities. In line with this authority, KOEC should be structured around core system functions rather than individual programs or funding streams to support coordinated, system-level operations.

A functional organizational model structures teams around shared responsibilities that span programs, such as provider supports, policy, compliance, quality, workforce supports, data and accountability, and fiscal and administrative management. This approach enables staff to develop expertise in system-wide functions and apply it consistently across programs, regardless of funding source or service type.

Organizing teams by individual programs or funding streams can lead to duplicative processes, fragmented oversight, and greater complexity for families, providers, and partners. A functional structure allows KOEC to oversee shared responsibilities such as compliance, monitoring, and reporting through unified teams, reducing duplication and improving efficiency. Figure 12 illustrates how a compliance function operates differently under a functional organizational structure compared to a funding-based structure.

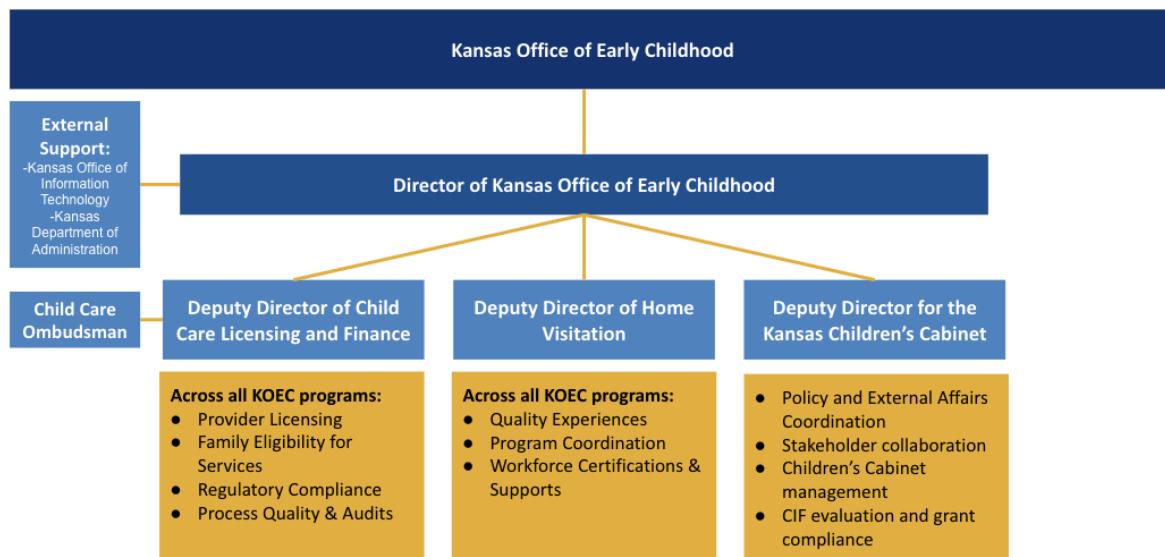
***Figure 12. Example of Compliance Function in Different Organizational Structures***

Teams Organized by System Function	Teams Organized by Funding Source
In a model that organizes teams by system function, KOEC would have a single compliance team that oversees and monitors compliance across all programs and funding sources under KOEC's purview.	In a model that organizes teams by funding source, each funding source would manage its own compliance processes.

Teams Organized by System Function	Teams Organized by Funding Source
This organization method would allow the KOEC compliance team to develop deep expertise in compliance and achieve efficiencies by overseeing compliance for all programs in the Office.	This organization method would lead to duplication of effort and additional complexity for system users.

Research on systems approaches to public service delivery suggests that complex service systems are more effective when they move beyond siloed programmatic structures and instead align around shared goals, feedback loops, and cross-cutting capabilities.<sup>17</sup> One way to enable this is to organize internal teams around core system functions rather than individual programs. In early childhood systems, where access, quality, data, and fiscal management span multiple services, a functional structure improves efficiency, reduces administrative complexity, and supports stronger system-level outcomes. Organizing KOEC around core system functions aligns with these principles and supports effective implementation of HB 2045. Figure 13 shows the proposed organizational structure. As the Office becomes fully operational after program integration on July 1, 2026, KOEC should continue to refine its structure to maintain efficiency and responsiveness.

**Figure 13. Proposed KOEC Organizational Structure**



Note: This is an initial org chart for KOEC and is still being finalized. The goal of the KOEC's structure will be to break down cross-program silos to increase efficiency and efficacy of staffing, initiatives, and funding. This chart only includes top-level positions for illustrative purposes and is not comprehensive.

<sup>17</sup> Zahra Mansoor and Martin J. Williams, "Systems Approaches to Public Service Delivery: Methods and Frameworks," *Journal of Public Policy* 44, no. 2 (June 2024): 258–283, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/0356501E9561077B88F8F96391461193/S0143814X23000405a.pdf/systems-approaches-to-public-service-delivery-methods-and-frameworks.pdf>.

***Recommendation 3: KOEC should develop and begin implementing a strong programmatic strategic plan to unify field-facing systems and improve service delivery.***

Families, providers, and other stakeholders engage with multiple early childhood programs, systems, and funding sources. Therefore, KOEC's first-year priority is to develop a strategic plan that improves the early childhood system from the user's perspective. This recommendation aims to better align and, where appropriate, unify field-facing systems to enhance service navigation, reduce administrative burden, and strengthen coordination across programs.

The planning process should begin with a comprehensive review and evaluation of the rules, regulations, and operational processes that shape interactions with early childhood services. This review should identify opportunities to eliminate redundancies, address user challenges, and improve efficiency across licensing, payments, monitoring, and communication, without changing program eligibility or service models. In addition to this initial comprehensive review, KOEC's strategic plan should address the following core elements:

***Family Access, Navigation, and Support***

KOEC should coordinate how families learn about, access, and move between early childhood services. This includes aligning entry points, referrals, and communication across programs, rather than creating new eligibility systems. A unified approach will make the system easier for families to understand and use, especially at key transition points such as birth, entry into care, and transition to preschool or kindergarten. In line with HB 2045, this work should include the Child Care Ombudsman role in KOEC's broader field-facing strategy. The Ombudsman can provide support for families and providers by resolving issues, clarifying requirements, and highlighting system-level barriers identified through direct engagement.

***Quality, Monitoring, and Continuous Improvement***

KOEC should align quality standards, monitoring, and continuous improvement supports for all early childhood programs under a single cross-system function. This approach promotes cohesive leadership, reduces duplicative requirements for providers, and ensures that quality investments are coordinated and mutually reinforcing across the mixed-delivery system.

### ***Workforce Policy and Supports***

KOEC should coordinate workforce responsibilities, including professional standards, career pathways, and workforce supports, across programs and agencies. Organizing these functions within a single cross-system structure enables KOEC to address workforce challenges strategically, align policy with higher education and workforce partners, and respond to recruitment and retention needs without favoring any setting or age group. KOEC should also leverage CAPE to provide a comprehensive picture of the workforce, including home visiting professionals, to inform these priorities and modernize the state's data system and add to the 6,929 active profiles on the registry.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Data, Evaluation, and Accountability***

KOEC should consider creating a unified data and accountability function to coordinate data collection, analysis, and reporting across early childhood programs. This recommendation supports KOEC's statutory responsibility to improve transparency and inform policymakers, without committing to specific data systems or outcomes. Centralizing these functions can reduce reporting burdens, strengthen cross-program insights, and support more informed decision-making.

### ***Recommendation 4: KOEC should establish a foundation of trust with providers, families, policymakers, and other key partners through efficient, transparent communication.***

Bringing together early childhood programs, budgets, and staff under one roof creates an unprecedented opportunity for more efficient, streamlined communication. HB 2045 requires the Office to provide easily accessible support and to ensure access to information, services, resolution of issues, and rules and regulations in a user-friendly manner as prescribed by the Director.

<sup>18</sup> KCCTO, *Career and Professional Empowerment (CAPE) Portal Data* (Jan. 6, 2026).

### ***Strong Internal Alignment on Responding and Messaging***

KOEC's stakeholders will expect clearer, more aligned program administration, including in communications. Research shows that conflicting or unclear internal guidance increases external confusion and administrative workload, requiring additional follow-up and correction.<sup>19</sup> This creates persistent inefficiencies that are easily addressed by establishing a shared understanding of the current policy status, pending decisions, and statutory constraints, thereby reducing rework and improving service delivery. KOEC should ensure there is internal alignment across programs and funding sources such that all external communication is clear, concise, and consistent.

### ***Predictable Communication Cadence to the Field, Families, and Partners***

KOEC should establish regular public updates aligned to statutory milestones to keep the public informed on its progress against requirements, especially as programs transfer to KOEC on July 1, 2026. KOEC should build its communication system on the understanding that a predictable cadence builds trust. KOEC should also set realistic expectations for how often communication will occur and establish a feasible, predictable strategy for communications (e.g., monthly updates, quarterly briefing webinars).

### ***Transparent Communications***

Acknowledging limits—whether statutory, fiscal, or policy—increases trust with any audience more than aspirational messaging.<sup>20</sup> Being clear about available programs and resources, rather than overpromising, is critical during the Office's start-up phase. In addition, having clear pathways for stakeholders to revisit communications, find reports, and view available data can help create transparency and trust among stakeholders.

### ***Leverage Two-Way Communication Mechanisms***

Evaluations of public service agencies show that frontline staff, technical assistance providers, and support functions often identify emerging issues earlier than formal complaints or audits. By tracking recurring themes across multiple feedback channels, the Office can be more proactive in its communication to the field. KOEC should track themes and close feedback loops consistently with stakeholders.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Federal User-Centered Design: Agencies Need to Improve Internal Coordination to Reduce Burden*. GAO-21-105325, (2021).

<sup>20</sup> OECD. *Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions*. (2022).

***Recommendation 5: KOEC should collaborate purposefully with legacy agencies to support the entire early childhood ecosystem.***

Collaboration is central to KOEC's role within state government and with communities. HB 2045 consolidates early childhood program administration within KOEC, but ongoing coordination with legacy agencies remains necessary as funding and responsibilities transition. Purposeful collaboration is essential to maintain continuity, clarity, and alignment across the early childhood system.

This recommendation acknowledges that effective collaboration includes not only early learning programs housed at KOEC, but also preschool, early intervention, maternal health, family preservation, child welfare, education, and other systems that influence outcomes for young children and families. Without replacing any other agency or program, KOEC's role is to work across these systems in a coordinated way that provides a vision for the state and promotes whole-child and whole-family outcomes.

***Coordination During Funding Transitions***

As funding and administrative responsibilities move to KOEC, close coordination with legacy agencies is needed to manage transition-year complexities, especially for federal awards. In some cases, legacy agencies will continue to produce reports, maintain records, and complete close-out activities for awards originally issued to them, even as KOEC assumes policy leadership and oversight of these programs.

To support this work, KOEC should establish clear coordination mechanisms, such as interagency agreements, that define roles for policy direction, grant administration, reporting, records retention, and compliance during and after the transition. This approach enables KOEC to provide unified policy leadership while ensuring administrative consistency and ongoing federal compliance.

### ***KOEC as the Public-Facing Home for Early Childhood***

As the Kansas Office of Early Childhood is established, it will become the public-facing point of coordination for early childhood in the state. In this role, KOEC should work with other state agencies to align policy direction, share information, and present a clearer picture of early childhood investments, outcomes, and system performance.

This includes coordinating with agencies that administer programs not transferring to KOEC, such as state-funded and school-based prekindergarten and early childhood special education, to support aligned goals and a shared direction for improving outcomes for children and families. Through this coordination, KOEC can help ensure that early childhood policies and investments across agencies are mutually reinforcing, even when statutory authority lies with multiple agencies.

### ***Cross-Agency Data Coordination and Reporting***

Consistent with its statutory role in improving transparency and informing policymakers, KOEC should work with partner agencies to coordinate reporting on early childhood data and outcomes across the broader system. While KOEC may not directly administer all early childhood programs, it can serve as a central point for aggregating and sharing information relevant to children, families, and the workforce.

This collaborative approach to data coordination, outlined further in Appendix B, supports a more comprehensive understanding of early childhood progress in Kansas and reinforces KOEC's role in promoting alignment across systems that shape early childhood outcomes.

## Future Considerations

The Legislature will continue to receive updates on the progress of the transition to KOEC, as the enabling legislation requires the Director of the Kansas Office of Early Childhood to submit an annual report on funds, outcomes, inefficiencies, actions taken, and rule changes. To fulfill this requirement and ensure transparency for stakeholders, Appendix B provides a reporting framework reflecting the Office's cross-functional responsibilities.

In future years, this report may also provide recommendations to the Legislature on organizational refinements, potential program transitions, and ways to improve efficiency and coordination across the early childhood system.

Together, the actions and recommendations of this report establish a foundation for continued legislative oversight, transparent reporting, and ongoing improvement as Kansas advances toward a more coordinated and accountable early childhood system.



## Appendices

### Appendix A. Detailed Overview of Programs Transitioning

#### ***Child Care Financial Assistance and Quality***

The Kansas Office of Early Childhood will assume responsibility for administering and overseeing child care financial assistance and quality improvement activities currently housed within the Kansas Department for Children and Families and the Kansas Department of Health & Environment.

Programs and functions transitioning include:

- Child Care Subsidy (Child Care Development Fund), including program policy, administration, and payment oversight
- Child care quality activities funded through CCDF
- Child Care Resource and Referral agency licensing functions
- Additional Child care advocacy and ombudsman services will be established within KOEC to support families and providers

Eligibility determination for child care subsidy will continue to be performed by DCF through an interagency agreement, including providing child care assistance (i.e., EBT cards) to families and oversight of the use of the EBT card benefit for child care.

#### ***Child Care Licensing and Regulatory Oversight***

All child care licensing and regulatory functions currently administered by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment will transition to the KOEC.

Transferred functions include:

- Licensing of day care facilities, including:
  - Child care centers
  - Family child care homes
  - Preschool programs that are subject to licensure
  - School-age programs
  - Youth development programs
- Inspection, monitoring, enforcement, waiver approval, and license revocation
- Licensing-related rulemaking authority
- Administration of pilot licensure programs to expand child care availability and capacity.

All existing rules, regulations, and enforcement actions remain in effect during the transition period, unless revised pursuant to law.

### ***Home Visiting Programs***

HB 2045 consolidates the administration of home visiting programs within the KOEC. These programs are currently administered by DCF, KDHE, and KSDE.

Home visiting programs transitioning to KOEC include:

- Healthy Families America (HFA)
- Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)
- Maternal and Child Health Universal Home Visiting (MCH)
- Kansas Early Head Start Home Visitation (EHS-HV)
- Parents as Teachers (PAT)

This transfer intends to support greater coordination, consistency, and alignment across home visiting models while preserving program integrity and evidence-based requirements.

### ***Head Start and Early Head Start Coordination***

The Kansas Office of Early Childhood will assume coordination and oversight of Head Start and Early Head Start partnerships currently administered by the Kansas Department for Children and Families.

Transferred functions include:

- Head Start Collaboration Office
- Kansas Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership

These transfers do not alter the operational responsibilities of local Head Start and Early Head Start grantees. They position KOEC as the primary state-level point of coordination and federal liaison.

### ***The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund***

HB 2045 transfers the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund in its entirety into the Kansas Office of Early Childhood.

Transferred responsibilities include:

- Administration of cabinet-approved programs
- Grantmaking and Children's Initiative Fund administration
- Statutory advisory and coordination functions under K.S.A. 38-1901

The Children's Cabinet continues to operate in accordance with statute, with administrative support from KOEC.

### ***Programs Not Transferring***

Several early childhood programs are not transferring to the KOEC:

- State-funded and school-based prekindergarten programs administered by the Kansas State Department of Education
- IDEA Part C and Part B early childhood special education services
- Child care subsidy eligibility determination and payments
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), as administered by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), as administered by the Kansas State Department of Education
- Families First Prevention Services Act, as administered by the Kansas Department for Children and Families

These exclusions will preserve existing statutory authority. However, KOEC may report on one or more of these programs annually to provide a comprehensive picture of Kansas' early childhood system.

### **Appendix B. Subsequent Annual Report Template**

See accompanying slides on subsequent pages.



## Appendix B

### Template for the Kansas Early Childhood Annual Report

# Overview of the Kansas Early Childhood Annual Report



## What is the Kansas Early Childhood Annual Report?

Beginning in January of 2027, KOEC plans to publish a **Kansas Early Childhood Annual Report**. The Annual Report will serve as a yearly routine for reporting data on the Kansas early childhood system in one place—combining the most updated measures of access, quality, and child/family outcomes across programs.

## Why publish an Annual Report?

By publishing this Report annually, KOEC will equip stakeholders with useful, up-to-date information about the state's early childhood system to highlight gaps and opportunities and enable data-informed decision making.

## How does KOEC enable better data reporting?

As a unified agency, KOEC is uniquely positioned to align data definitions, integrate information across programs, and produce a single statewide view of early childhood progress—something Kansas has not been able to do consistently before.

# Overview of the Annual Report Template



## **What is the purpose of the Annual Report template?**

The following slides lay out a proposed blank template for future Kansas Early Childhood Annual Reports. This template provides a clear, repeatable structure for organizing the key data, measures, and narrative elements KOEC will report annually, ensuring the final report is consistent, transparent, and comparable year over year.

## **How should stakeholders use this template?**

This blank template is a preview of what KOEC will report annually. Stakeholders can use it now to understand which indicators KOEC will work to track, how progress will be measured year over year, and what future reporting will enable—including clearer oversight, faster identification of gaps, and more informed policy and budget decisions once the first full report is published.

*This template represents the information/metrics thought to be most valuable to track at this time. KOEC should utilize this template as a resource, but should adapt as needed based on additional stakeholder input and strategic direction.*



# Kansas Early Childhood

## [YEAR] Annual Report

# Kansas Office of Early Childhood: Purpose & Vision

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**Purpose.** KOEC exists to strengthen early childhood systems by improving efficiency, transparency, and safety in state programs, funding, and policy implementation.

**Vision.** Kansas envisions an early childhood system in which:

- **Every child** is supported and equipped with the foundations necessary for lifelong success.
- **Families** have access to early childhood programs and services through a coordinated, easy-to-navigate system that reduces fragmentation & administrative burden.
- **Providers** across a mixed-delivery system are supported, well-prepared, and have the resources necessary to deliver high-quality experiences for children.
- **Businesses and communities** are strengthened through a coordinated approach that supports workforce participation and enables families to thrive.

# Annual Report Overview

At the start of each year, KOEC will release a statewide annual report reflecting key data, trends, and insights from the previous year regarding early childhood programs and outcomes. The data shown in this report reflects the most recent available data for reporting. This report is intended to serve as a comprehensive review of the state of early childhood education in Kansas and our goals going forward.

The [insert year] Early Childhood Annual Report overviews the following information about the Kansas early childhood education system:

- Overview of Kansas' publicly-funded early childhood programs
- Trends, analysis, and takeaways
- Insights regarding the early childhood workforce
- Key accomplishments, updates, and priorities

# Data Sources Overview

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This report draws on a mix of administrative data and public reports to describe Kansas' early childhood system, and to support ongoing annual reflection regarding what program reach, gaps, and areas for future focus.

- **Internal program and administrative data:**
  - [insert list of included data sources]
  
- **External facing data, including:**
  - [insert list of included data sources]

An exhaustive list of sources is included on each slide, including links, caveats, and any additional relevant information.

## Kansas Overview: Demographics

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Kansas's key demographic information help identify which regions and populations should be targeted for investment and services. These include:

### Full population

- **Total Population:** [Insert data]
- **Birth to Age 5 Population:** [Insert data]
- **Kindergarten Cohort:** [Insert data]

### Targeted population

- **Number and percent of young children:** [Insert data]
  - Considered in poverty (income for a family of four): [Insert data]
  - Considered economically disadvantaged (income for a family of four): [Insert data]
- **Other targeted demographic information:** [Insert data]



## Section 1: Overview of Kansas' Publicly-Funded Early Childhood Programs

# Program Type Overview: ECE

For the purpose of this Annual Report, early childhood programs are categorized in the following ways.

Overarching Site Type	Description	Specific Site Type	Description	Administered by KOEC?
Early Care and Education (ECE)	Early care and education (ECE) is defined here as programs that provide child care and early learning experiences for young children, including child care, preschool, and Head Start.	Child Care Assistance (CCDF) (Ages 0-12)*	Helps eligible working families afford child care through federal Child Care Development Fund support, including payment systems and subsidy policy.	Yes
		Preschool (Age 4 primarily)	Public preschool programming (often school-based) for children in the year(s) before kindergarten.	No, remains at KSDE
		Head Start/Early Head Start (Ages 0-5)	Federally funded comprehensive early childhood program serving primarily low-income children (ages 3-5), including education, health, and family supports.	Yes (coordination role); KOEC houses Head Start Collaboration Office

*\*Note: For the purpose of most sections of this report, the data focuses on the 0-5 population*

# Program Type Overview: Early Childhood Special Education

For the purpose of this Annual Report, early childhood programs are categorized in the following ways.

Overarching Site Type	Description	Specific Site Type	Description	Administered by KOEC?
Early Childhood Special Education	Services and supports for eligible infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children with developmental delays or disabilities, provided through IDEA Part C (birth-3) and IDEA Part B (ages 3-5).	IDEA Part B (Ages 3-5)	Preschool special education services for children ages 3–5 with qualifying disabilities, provided through an individualized education program (IEP) to support access and learning in early childhood settings.	No, remains at KSDE
		IDEA Part C (Ages 0-3)	Early intervention services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities, focused on supporting development and strengthening family capacity.	No, remains at KDHE

# Program Type Overview: Home Visitation

For the purpose of this Annual Report, early childhood programs are categorized in the following ways.

Overarching Site Type	Description	Specific Site Type	Description	Administered by KOEC?
Home Visitation	Home visitation is defined here as programs that provide support and education to families through visits in the home, often beginning prenatally or in early childhood.	Early Head Start Home Visitation (EHS-HV) <i>(Prenatal to Age 3)</i>	Home-based Early Head Start programming for infants/toddlers and pregnant people, emphasizing development, health, and family supports.	Yes
		MIECHV <i>(Prenatal to Age 5)</i>	Federally funded evidence-based home visiting model funding stream focused on improving outcomes for pregnant people and families with young children.	Yes
		Parents as Teachers (PAT) <i>(Prenatal to Age 5)</i>	Evidence-based model that supports families through child development guidance and parent education, typically from prenatal through kindergarten entry.	Yes
		Healthy Families America Home Visiting (HFA) <i>(Prenatal to Age 5)</i>	Evidence-based home visiting model focused on strengthening parent-child relationships, promoting healthy development, and preventing adverse childhood experiences.	Yes
		MCH Universal Home Visiting <i>(Prenatal to Age 5)</i>	Home visiting support intended to reach families broadly (not solely high-risk), often focused on early screening, connection to services, and prevention.	Yes

## Program Type Overview: Non-Early Childhood Programs

For the purpose of this Annual Report, additional programs that are administered and funded by KOEC but are not providing care and education for children before kindergarten aligned to the school day are outlined below:

- School-aged programs: *insert description*
- Out-of-school time:assistance: *insert description*
- Drop in care: *insert description*
- Outdoor Summer Camps: *insert description*
- *[additional]*

# Publicly-Funded ECE Programs



	Child Care Assistance	Preschool	Head Start/ Early Head Start
Eligibility Criteria			
Program Requirements			
Average Hours/Days			
Total Funding and Source			
Number of Children Served			
Amount of Public Funding Per Child			

## Child Care Assistance Program Fee Structure

[Insert information on Child Care Assistance Program Fee Structure, Rates, and Family Share Deduction]

# Provider Participation in Child Care Assistance, By Site Type

[Insert data takeaway]

	Total	Number Accepting Child Care Assistance	% Accepting Child Care Assistance
Child Care Center			
Family Child Care Home			
Mixed delivery sites (Preschool + Head Start)			
Total			

## Early Childhood Special Education

	IDEA Part B (3-5 year olds)	IDEA Part C (0-3 year olds)
Total Funding and Source		
Number of Children Served		

# Home Visitation

	Early Head Start Home Visitation (EHS-HV)	MIECHV	Parents as Teachers (PAT)	Healthy Families America Home Visiting (HFA)	MCH Universal Home Visiting
<b>Target Population and Goals</b>					
<b>Eligibility Criteria</b>					
<b>Model</b>					
<b>Total Funding and Source</b>					
<b>Availability and Capacity</b>					
<b>Number of Families/Children Served</b>					
<b>Amount of Public Funding Per Family/Child</b>					

## Other Programs Administered by KOEC

A yellow arrow graphic pointing to the right, located at the top left of the table area.

	School-Aged Programs	Out-of-School Time	Drop In	Outdoor Summer Camp
Eligibility Criteria				
Program Requirements				
Average Hours/Days				
Total Funding and Source				
Number of Children Served				
Amount of Public Funding Per Child				



## Section 2: Trends, Analysis, and Takeaways

## Improving Access and Quality: Overview

[Insert overview of quality-related initiatives and program administration, including QRIS]

# Changes in Regulated Care and L2Q participation

[Insert data takeaway]

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2025 Change
Licensed Centers					
L2Q Centers					
Percent Centers L2Q					
Family Child Care Homes					
L2Q FCC Homes					
Percent FCC Homes L2Q					

# Access to Quality Early Care and Education

[Insert data takeaway, with potential to include year-over-year trends]

	Number and Percent of Economically Disadvantaged Served		
	Served in Programs Participating in L2Q	Served in Programs <u>Not</u> Participating in L2Q	Unserved
Infants			
One Year Olds			
Two Year Olds			
Three Year Olds			
Four Year Olds			
Total			

# Kindergarten Readiness

[Insert data takeaway]

[Insert data on kindergarten readiness]

## Compliance to Safety Regulations

[Insert data takeaway]

[Insert data regarding compliance to safety regulations, including trends in licensing violations]

## Complaints Received & Resolved

[Insert data takeaway]

[Insert data regarding complaints received and resolved]

## Access to Home Visitation

[Insert data takeaway with geographic trends]

[Insert map showing model availability and utilization by region]



## Section 3: Early Childhood Workforce

## Early Childhood Workforce: Overview

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[Insert overview of CAPE, including data limitations (such as the lack of home visiting professionals/programs on the platform), and key initiative updates from previous year]

## Description of the Early Childhood Workforce (CAPE)

Demographics of the Early Childhood Workforce (based on X active CAPE members):

- X% are female
- X% speak English as their primary language
- Ethnicity:

African American	Caucasian American	Hispanic American	Other Ethnicities

- Education Level:

High School Education or No Verified Degree	30 College Credits	CDA or Approved Career Diploma	Associate Degree	Bachelor Degree of Higher

## Description of the Early Childhood Workforce (CAPE)

	Child Care	Head Start/ Early Head Start	Preschool	Home Visiting
Current Credential Requirement				
Average Compensation				

Similarly Qualified Professions	Kansas Average Wages (Year)
Social Assistance (Child and youth services, community food services, temporary shelters, child day care services)	[Include Kansas Average Wage for Similar Profession from BLS]
Nursing/Residential Care Facilities (Community care facilities, home for elderly, residential mental health facilities)	[Include Kansas Average Wage for Similar Profession from BLS]
Education (elementary and secondary, junior colleges, universities, business schools)	[Include Kansas Average Wage for Similar Profession from BLS]

# Early Childhood Workforce Pipeline

[Insert data regarding higher education students enrolled in Early childhood and Elementary Education programs]

	[Prior Year]		[Current Year]	
	Enrollments	Completions	Enrollments	Completions
Short-Term Certificates				
Certificates				
Associate Degrees				
Bachelor's Degrees				
Master's Degrees				
Other Certificate Awards				
Total				



## Section 4: Key Accomplishments, Updates, and Priorities

## Overview of Accomplishments from Prior Year

Major accomplishments from the past year include:

Accomplishment 1

Accomplishment 2

Accomplishment 3

## Updates on KOEC Pilots and New Initiatives

Updates on KOEC-led pilots and new initiatives include:

**Update 1**

**Update 2**

**Update 3**

## Priorities for the Upcoming Year

To ensure KOEC will effectively deliver on its charge to increase transparency, safety, and efficiency, and be prepared to improve upon the outcomes outlined in this report moving report, KOEC will focus on the following priorities in the coming year:

**Priority 1**

**Priority 2**

**Priority 3**

## This Report in Future Years

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[Insert conclusions and future considerations for reporting]