



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

WELCOME CAMPER

CHILD CARE AWARE® OF EASTERN KANSAS



TABLE OF CONTENTS/ SERVICE MAP

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

4. CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

6. CHILDREN & FAMILIES

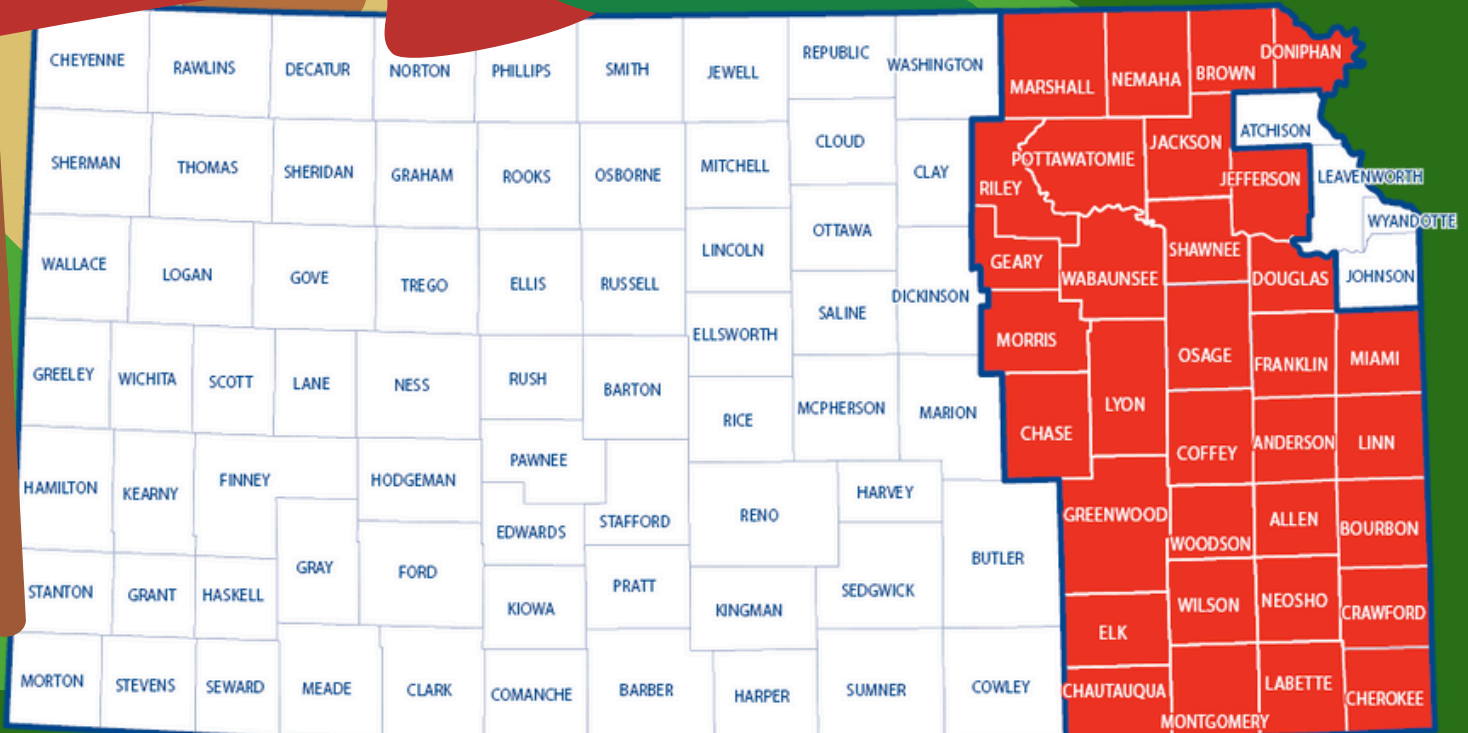
7. COMMUNITIES & BUSINESSES

8. PUBLIC POLICY

2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS/STAFF

2023 FINANCIALS & AGENCY FUNDING

Service Map





SARAH E. ELSÉN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

As I present this year's annual report, I'm thrilled to share a look back on our journey through 2023—a year marked by both resilience and growth. Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas has remained dedicated to our mission: fostering the healthy development of young children by enhancing access to high-quality child care options and providing invaluable resources to families and early childhood professionals alike. Our work this past year reflects a commitment to our core mission, even

as we encountered an evolving child care landscape and persistent, complex challenges.

Across our region, the demand for child care has consistently outpaced supply, and 2023 proved to be no different. Limited availability has long been an issue, but this past year brought even greater focus to the challenges that child care programs face in reaching and maintaining full capacity. Many providers are struggling with workforce shortages, unable to recruit and retain qualified teachers who are essential to operating licensed programs. Despite ongoing incentives and support, program closures continue to exceed new openings. The impact of this shortage is deeply felt, not only by parents and children but by entire communities. These challenges have emphasized the importance of our work in seeking proactive, sustainable solutions.

In response, we redoubled our collaborative efforts with community and business leaders, partnering closely with Child Care Aware® of Kansas to pinpoint and implement tailored, localized strategies to support child care providers. Together, we've been identifying solutions designed to meet the specific needs of each community, fostering environments where child care programs can thrive despite the challenges they face. As we look toward 2025, these partnerships and the resulting initiatives are more critical than ever to building a stronger, more resilient child care infrastructure.

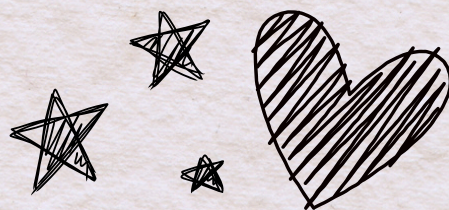
Yet, even amid these hurdles, there is so much to celebrate. Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas has consistently been recognized for its ability to provide timely, compassionate support and guidance to families, child care providers, and community members. Our team of professionals is exceptional, bringing expertise, passion, and dedication to their work. Their unwavering commitment, coupled with the support of our incredible network of volunteers, donors, business partners, community agencies, and foundations, has empowered us to make a meaningful, lasting impact. Through our trusted partnerships and steadfast dedication to quality, we have been able to support every family, provider, and community partner who turned to us for assistance this past year.

We owe much of our success to the generous support of our donors and friends. Your ongoing contributions are essential, allowing us to continue addressing the pressing needs of children, families, and child care providers. If you're interested in learning more about our programs, initiatives, or upcoming projects, please don't hesitate to reach out. Together, we are building a brighter future, making a profound difference in the lives of those we serve as we work to meet the child care needs of our communities.

With heartfelt gratitude and hope for the year ahead,

Sarah E. Elsen

Sarah E. Elsen
Executive Director



CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

In 2023, **1,422** child care programs and their staff were served across the 33-county region of Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas.

Professional Development continued in three formats: in-person, via Zoom, and online, providing participants the flexibility to choose classes that best suited their needs and learning styles. In 2023, Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas hosted **67** Zoom classes, **103** in-person classes, and **27** online sessions.

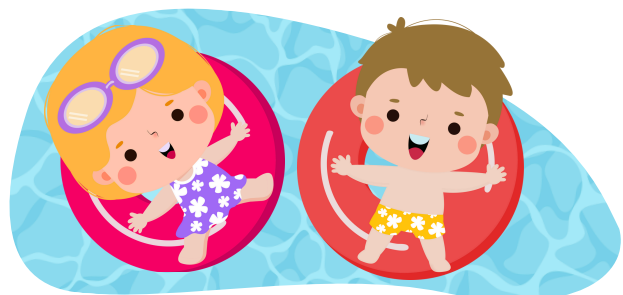
For **19** years, the agency has offered professional development tailored for child care center directors and administrators. This year, the **Director's Toolbox** covered topics such as connecting staff to curriculum goals, wage and hour requirements, working with a multigenerational staff, strategic planning, leading with purpose, and strengthening business practices. The Toolbox included **three** in-person classes, **one** virtual class via Zoom, and **two** instructor-led asynchronous online sessions.

Capital Area Successful Start (CASS) is a collaborative project funded by the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, which brings together eight community partners through the Shawnee County Early Childhood Block Grant. Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas works with agencies to serve children from prenatal to age five and their families. Partners include TARC's Tiny-K and PACT programs, Shawnee County Nurse-Family Partnership, USD 501 Parents as Teachers, Kansas Children's Service League's initiatives, Family Service & Guidance

Center, Community Action Head Start, and the United Way of Greater Topeka. In 2023, staff supported **68** early childhood classrooms in Shawnee County, serving **407** at-risk children and their families by providing coaching, professional development, and resources to prepare them for success in school.

Child Care Aware® of Kansas funds the **Child Care Quality Initiative (CCQI)** through the Department of Children and Families. The initiative aims to improve the quality of child care environments. Regional Community Consultants host monthly provider-driven Learning Community meetings, offering opportunities to network, share resources, learn about Shared Services, and plan future topics. Providers can also seek support for accreditation, child screenings, goal setting, and other quality improvement efforts. Currently, **258** providers in **27** counties are participating in the program.

The **Nemours Project**, funded by Child Care Aware® of Kansas, provided two full-day Physical Activity Learning Sessions (PALS) training for child care providers. Participants received 6.5 hours of KDHE-approved training, lunch, and door prizes. A total of **45** participants completed the training and received follow-up support on the importance of physical activity in early childhood education (ECE) settings.



PROVIDERS CONTINTUED

The **Child Care Health Consultant (CCHC)** network is funded by the Kansas Department of Health & Environment through Child Care Aware® of Kansas. CCHC aims to work with potential child care providers to provide consultation and support as they navigate the licensing process, working in tandem with the child care licensing specialists. CCHC Consultants helped **367** providers receive start-up stipends to help offset some of the costs of opening a child care business. The consultants have provided **314** technical assistance to potential providers in every county in our region. They have assisted **328** providers in receiving their temporary licenses, and **329** have moved to obtain their permanent licenses from KDHE.

In the spring of 2023, work funded by the **Preschool Development Grant (PDG)** through the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund was completed. Final funding supported early childhood professionals in Kindergarten Roundup efforts, increased infant/toddler care availability, expanded care facilities, and boosted family engagement in child care programs. The remaining funds were used to purchase a LiveScan fingerprinting unit, allowing the agency's office to serve as an additional location for new and current child care providers to complete fingerprinting, a requirement for Kansas licensing.

Baby Steps is funded through Child Care Aware of Kansas from funding provided by the Patterson Family Foundation. Due to capacity ratios, family child care providers may lose income when they enroll an infant. Through the Baby Steps program, providers are

compensated for their loss of income, increasing the number of available infant spots. Currently, **12** Family Child Care Providers are participating in Baby Steps in four counties in our region, and overall, there has been an increase in infant spots by **27**.

The Shared Services Network Hub, funded through Child Care Aware® of Kansas with support from the Department of Children and Families, is currently available to providers in the Southeast region. This initiative aims to pool resources to help providers remain sustainable. This effort has partnered with the Southeast KS library system to provide providers access to professional totes and learning resources. Other shared services offered include an HR Hotline, EAP Services, Laminating, and Substitute Services.

The **Topeka ARPA Child Care Access Project**, funded by the City of Topeka, began in January 2023 to improve access to high-quality child care. The project focused on increasing infant care slots, expanding care for non-traditional hours (before 7:00 a.m., after 6:00 p.m., and weekends), and supporting business practices such as tuition costs and partnerships. It also provided coaching for providers looking to expand or open additional locations. Available to child care programs within Topeka city limits, the project included information sessions, individual coaching, and resources like consumer education for businesses. Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas also coordinated the Topeka Child Care Task Force and raised awareness about non-traditional care through the weekly e-newsletter, The Sandbox.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

A total of **13,972** child care referrals were completed through the Child Care Aware® of Kansas Parent Resource Center Operated by Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas.

7,852 families used the Resource Center by calling or utilizing the online service. Of those families, **1,209** searched for non-traditional hours (evenings, weekends, or both).

Families received referrals to licensed child care programs, information on things to look for, and questions to ask when interviewing. Referral services benefitted **7,872** children.

Families who contacted the Parent Resource Center also received information about community resources and support services, including information about home visitation programs, child screenings, and health agencies.

The **Successful Connections** program offers support and connects pregnant women and families with new babies to community resources in Shawnee County. Through a collaborative community network, families are also given information and referred to programs offering ongoing parent education and developmental screenings for their children. In 2023, Successful Connections connected with **744** families and shared helpful and free resources based on their needs. Through our partnership with local hospitals, families received a packet with a cuddle blanket handmade by agency volunteers, a child development calendar, information on finding child care, 1-800-Children, and other valuable community resources.

A new partnership was created with Topeka Rescue Mission in 2023 to provide these same great services to families with young children residing at the shelter.



COMMUNITIES & BUSINESSES

In 2023, child care capacity in local communities continued to be a concern to business and civic leaders who found themselves in unfamiliar territory as they tried to determine how to address this critical piece of infrastructure needed to grow the local economy. Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas continued responding to requests for information and data for community and business leaders. Through the **Community Outreach & Engagement** work funded by the Kansas Department for Children and Families through Child Care Aware® of Kansas, presentations were prepared for delivery to business and civic groups upon request. The continued work of the **Child Care Health Consultant** network in 2023 supported local community efforts around child care provider recruitment events to build local child care capacity. (Read more about the Child Care Health Consultant work on page 4 of this report.) Agency staff continued participating in various community events, including health fairs, back-to-school fairs, job fairs, and other regional events, to share information regarding high-quality early education topics. These events served as outreach and education efforts for local communities and as a means to promote child care as a career.

During the spring of 2023, Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas had the opportunity to continue hosting **Communities in Action** workshops, following a model created by Child Care Aware® of Kansas. These sessions brought community partners and stakeholders together to examine their communities' child care needs and create community-led solutions. The model proved successful, expanding this opportunity to other counties throughout the region. Since that initial launch, the agency hosted an additional **10** in-person sessions in Emporia, Ft. Scott, Frontenac, Holton, Humboldt, Independence, Junction City, Manhattan, Marysville, Parsons, Paola, and **one** virtually. These events engaged participants from 30 of the 33 counties in our service delivery area (Allen, Anderson, Bourbon, Brown, Chase, Chautauqua, Crawford, Coffey, Doniphan, Douglas, Elk, Franklin, Geary, Jackson, Jefferson, Labette, Linn, Lyon, Marshall, Miami, Montgomery, Morris, Nemaha, Neosho, Osage, Pottawatomie, Riley, Shawnee, Wabaunsee, and Wilson). As an outcome of the Communities in Action workshop, **21** community taskforces were established to address the shortage of child care slots in their communities. Throughout the year, staff supported local coalitions as they launched action plans to address child care capacity in their communities. Approximately **350** child care slots have been created through the work of these coalitions in our 33-county region



PUBLIC POLICY

Public policy is defined as a purposeful and consistent course of action produced as a response to a perceived problem of a constituency, formulated by a specific political process, and adopted, implemented, and enforced by a public agency. Everyone has a role in shaping public policy through advocacy efforts.

Public Policy Statement:

ERC Resource & Referral, Inc., dba Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas, is committed to:

- Advocating for federal, state, and local policies that support working families with young children, including child care resource and referral services for every family.
- Working collaboratively with other entities to define the issues and challenges facing families with young children in today's society.
- Sharing information about national, state, and local policy issues that have an impact on families with young children with families, child care providers, businesses, and community leaders.
- Showing support for accessible, affordable, high-quality programs and services that meet the needs of families with young children.

Public Policy Principles:

Our organization:

- Recognizes parents as their child's first and most important teacher.
- Connects families with resources in their community that support their child's development, supporting family choice.
- Promotes high-quality early education in every setting, including family child care, center-based care, preschools, Head Start, license-exempt programs, and schools.
- Embraces the belief that learning starts at birth and what happens in a child's earliest years lays the foundation for all later learning, strongly impacting their success in school and beyond.



2023 Board of Directors

President

Cherie Sage

President-Elect

Dawn Bicknell-Reiser

Immediate Past President

Liz Steffen

Directors

Lucinda Anstaett

Amy Bauer

Donna Doel

Jordan McKnight

Kelly Trussell

Secretary

Jamie Stafford

Treasurer

Erin Lewis

Treasurer-Elect

Catherine Deters

Joe Beasley

Deb Crowl

Natalie Gordon

Catherine Shafer



2023 Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas Staff

Executive Director

Sarah Elsen

Accountant

Diana Ingram-Cantrell

Marketing & Communications Coordinator

Julie Scott

Data Specialist

Holly Wehner

Administrative Assistant

Earlina Faurot

Community Outreach & Engagement Manager

Rhianna Nelson

Family Services Manager

Nancy Rohr

Resource Specialists

Lori Boos (Team Leader), Tosha Lawson,

Heidy Sanchez Arreola

Provider Services Managers

Michelle Gilbert, Talia Juiliano-Myers,

Renee Wohletz

Project Manager

Karin Juarez

Regional Community Consultants

Kristina Griffie, Autumn Ryser

Professional Development Specialists

Dawn Brown, Kari Cronister, Mary Murphy

Early Care & Education Specialists

Grace Cott, Susan Drewelow, Olivia Falk,

Debbie Hildebrandt, Deana Turner

Child Care Health Consultants

Regina Blaske, Deb Danielson, Tia Wright

Successful Connections Parent

Resource Specialists

Jane Redger (Team Leader), Jennie Heim,

Ashley Buss

Library Resource Specialist

Stephanie Prue

Special Projects & Initiatives Coordinator

Marie Treichel





Statement of Financial Position

Year Ending December 31, 2023

Assets	2023
Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$ 1,048,209
Receivables	250,641
Investments	148,357
Property Held for Sale	0
Operating Lease Right of Use	342,966
Other	112,993
Total Assets	1,903,166
Liabilities & Net Assets	
Accounts & Notes Payable	20,945
Operating Lease Liabilities	89,173
Accrued Expenses	139,371
Unearned Revenue	96,116
Total Liabilities Current	345,605
NonCurrent Operating Lease Liabilities	256,104
Total Liabilities	601,709
Without Donor Restrictions	1,230,082
With Donor Restrictions	71,375
Total Net Assets	1,301,457
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$ 1,903,166

Statement of Activities

Year Ended December 31, 2023

Without Donor Restrictions

Revenues

Grant & Contract Income

Child Care Aware of Kansas	\$ 909,207
County CARES Act Funding	\$ -
Capital Area Successful Start	771,249
Preschool Development Grant	208,822
United Way	19,194
Other Grants or Programs	223,704

Other Revenue

Showhouse & Other Special Events-net of expenses	53,161
Provider Training	16,928
Donations and Contributions	332,825
Other Revenue	(210,864)
Total Revenues	2,324,226

Total Unrestricted Revenue, Gains

2,324,226

& Other Support

Expenses

Program Services	1,955,771
Fundraising Expense	33,229
All Other Operating Expense	211,403
Total Expenses	2,200,403

Change in Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions

\$ 123,823

With Donor Restrictions

Contributions and Program Revenue	4,560
Net Assets Released From Restrictions	0

Change in Net Assets With Donor Restrictions

4,560

Change in Total Net Assets

128,383

Net Assets at Beginning of Year

1,173,074

Net Assets at End of Year

\$ 1,301,457

2023 AGENCY FUNDING

The agency is supported through a variety of grants, contracts and fund-raising efforts, including:

- Kansas Department for Children & Families through Child Care Aware® of Kansas
- Kansas Children's Cabinet
- Child Care Aware® of America
- City of Topeka
- Greater Topeka Partnership
- United Way of Greater Topeka
- Kansas Health Foundation
- Patterson Foundation
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas
- Topeka Community Foundation
- Individual Donor Support
- Support from Area Businesses & Corporations
- Agency fundraising activities