

Kansas Children's Agenda

LET'S MAKE OUR STATE THE BEST PLACE TO RAISE – AND BE – A CHILD

Food. Shelter. Health care. Education. With these building blocks in place, Kansas kids succeed. But too often, poverty and structural racism keep them out of reach.

For 40 years, Kansas Action for Children has worked to change this. We listen to families and the organizations that support them, gather data that reflects their realities, then share this work with lawmakers.

The best solution, though, is bigger than anything that comes from the Statehouse. When Kansans from every corner of the state, inspired and educated, use their votes and voices, our kids win.

The Kansas Children's Agenda, supported by advocates across the state, gives this shared movement a clear direction.

ABOUT THE AGENDA

The Kansas Children's Agenda is built on a foundation of work to improve early learning, health, and family economic security. Our kids need quality and affordable child care. Our kids need a doctor's visit when they get sick. Our kids need a place to stay and food to eat if their families go through tough times. The agenda's recommendations provide a starting point for solutions.

We're not just looking to change laws or implement good ideas. We want to invest resources, time, and attention in our next

generation. And we're setting out a shared platform that shows us how to get there with clear voice amplifying the values of caring Kansans.

Our coalition has much to add in these critical areas. We will always center racial equity, because those Kansans who have been longest neglected so often have the greatest need.

Kansas kids need a state that stands up for them. The Kansas Children's Agenda shows us how to get there.

ORGANIZED BY



**Kansas
Action
for Children**

Kansas Children's Agenda



EARLY LEARNING

Recent research tells us that the first five years of a child's life are the most critical for brain development. Learning starts at birth, not whenever someone starts school. High-quality child care is essential for setting a child on the path towards success.

Leaders must:

Expand high-quality early education opportunities for all Kansas kids

- Support families by limiting child care expenses to no more than 7% of household income
- Increase state funding and leverage all available federal funds for evidence-based early learning programs
- Expand eligibility for the existing employer tax credit for child care to create an incentive for small businesses to cover the cost of child care for their employees
- Increase the amount of child care assistance a family can receive so that child care providers are appropriately compensated for working with families that have difficulty affording care

Support the early education workforce because they are essential people in the first years of a child's development

- Adopt meaningful financial incentives for child care providers to improve the quality of their programs
- Implement a statewide Quality Rating Improvement System
- Explore ways to use the Child Care Development Fund to support adequate and equitable compensation for child care providers

Support communities as they work toward local solutions for specific child care needs

- Promote existing state programs like the business tax credit and child care assistance program to cities, counties, chambers, and economic development offices across the state
- Customize support to local needs such as infrastructure, overhead, and workforce development funding to ensure availability of child care

Kansas Children's Agenda



HEALTH

Affordable health care is necessary for children and adults, and untreated illness costs money and lives. We should start with ensuring access to care for expectant moms to improve their health. It continues with making certain Kansas' littlest residents and their caregivers can see the doctor when needed and have nutritious food to eat.

Leaders must:

Improve eligibility and access to the KanCare program for kids and families

- Expand the KanCare program so more Kansans have access to health care
- Extend KanCare coverage to new mothers to a full year after giving birth
- Implement policies to provide equal access and coverage for telehealth visits
- Address KanCare enrollment and renewal barriers that families encounter with the KanCare systems

Protect Kansas children, families, and the general population from illness and disease

- Protect current vaccination requirements for school-age children
- Promote the safety, efficacy, and importance of vaccines through increased program outreach and public education

Kansas Children's Agenda



FAMILY AND ECONOMIC SECURITY

Families thrive when their basic needs are met. But harmful legislation has created obstacles for Kansas families accessing anti-poverty programs. Over the last five years, Kansas has seen a continued decline of children and families using these programs. We must strengthen families' economic stability, ability to plan for the future, and capacity to deal with unexpected events.

Leaders must:

Remove state-imposed barriers to federal programs so our eligible families can enroll in these programs during their critical times of need

- Reinstate cash assistance lifetime limits to the federal guideline of 60 months maximum so families can pay for rent, utilities, and other necessities
- Remove state-imposed barriers to food assistance such as limitations to working adults and those who have been involved in the justice system so families can keep food on the table
- Stand for families in anti-poverty programs by removing punitive sanctions that make it harder for children to participate in the programs we know work to move Kansas kids out of poverty

Support asset-building, particularly for communities that experienced historical and structural barriers to securing wealth

- Add a fourth individual income tax bracket for Kansas' highest income earners to clean up the tax code so that everyone, including those at the top, pays what they owe
- Limit state and local government reliance on revenue from fees and fines that can trap Kansans – particularly low-income Kansans and Kansans of color – in cycles of poverty and debt
- Expand existing or add new tax credits that support families with young children – such as expanding the earned income tax credit to all tax filers, including those who do not have a social security number, increasing the amount of the child and dependent care tax credit, and implementing a state child tax credit
- Implement children's savings accounts for asset-building early in life, with a focus on funding for higher education