

Annual Report

JULY 2024 - JUNE 2025



KCCTO
Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities

Supporting those who care for, educate & advocate on behalf of young children & families

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Architecting Kansas' Future



Dear colleagues and partners,

The future is created today — and nowhere is this truth more evident than in Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities, or KCCTO's, transformative work. KCCTO's 2024-2025 achievements represent the architectural blueprint of Kansas' tomorrow, drawn by dedicated professionals across all 105 counties.

For nearly four decades, KCCTO has served as both visionary and steward of our state's most critical workforce infrastructure. The early childhood care and education sector enables families to participate fully in our economy while nurturing the young minds that will drive Kansas forward for generations.

The impact speaks for itself: over 12,000 Kansans served through 1,500+ evidence-based training opportunities. In launching Cape, Kansas' inaugural early childhood workforce registry, KCCTO has created a comprehensive data ecosystem that anticipates workforce needs and builds career pathways. The career pathway initiative, supported by dedicated navigators, represents social mobility in action — strengthening individuals and communities across urban and rural Kansas.

What excites me most is KCCTO's recognition that we are not simply addressing today's workforce shortages — we're building a professional infrastructure that will support Kansas families for decades. These investments in professional development and data-driven decision making will yield dividends across multiple generations.

KCCTO is architecting tomorrow's possibilities. With their strategic vision and unwavering commitment to excellence, Kansas is positioned to create extraordinary opportunities for our children, families and communities.

Sincerely,

Marshall Stewart, Ed.D.
Executive Vice President for External Engagement and
Chief of Staff Kansas State University

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

KCCTO has grown from a grassroots in-person training initiative to a sophisticated, statewide professional development system supporting early childhood care professionals through every stage of their careers.

Guided by a Board of Directors, vision, mission, and strategic plan, Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that is a sponsored project of the College of Health and Human Sciences at Kansas State University.

Since moving from Unger Hall in 2023, KCCTO has continued settling into its new space in Kedzie Hall on the K-State campus, bringing the organization closer to the energy and activity of the university community.

The support and partnership of the College of Health and Human Sciences and Kansas State University play an important role in advancing KCCTO's mission by expanding the network of support to strengthen the early childhood care and education workforce across the state of Kansas.

Kansas State University | College of Health and Human Sciences

KCCTO
Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities

1986

Incorporated as a nonprofit organization with a focus on providing in-service training for early childhood professionals statewide. Received the organization's first grant from the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS), now the Department for Children and Families (DCF).

1987

Began supporting early childhood professionals pursuing their Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential.

1992

Expanded training capacity to 228 active community-based trainers and established a course library of 19 in-service courses, each providing 10 hours of professional development.

2004

Introduced a new training modality by launching the organization's first online courses, increasing accessibility to professional development opportunities statewide.

Our Vision

A strong foundation for each and every child

Our Mission

KCCTO advances early childhood care and education through an evidence-informed system of professional learning and supports.



2012

Awarded the statewide Professional Development contract through CCDF funds administered by DCF, expanding KCCTO's role in advancing the early childhood workforce across Kansas.

2013

Unveiled a new organizational logo to reflect KCCTO's growth.

2016

Awarded the Infant Toddler Specialist Network contract through CCDF funds administered by DCF, in partnership with Kansas Inservice Training System (KITS), expanding KCCTO's services to include targeted supports for professionals working with infants and toddlers.

2022

Selected as the lead agency for implementation of the Kansas Early Childhood Career Pathway initiative, helping to build and promote career advancement opportunities for the early childhood workforce.

2024

Selected as the build and implementation partner for Cape, the early childhood workforce registry, supporting system-wide data integration and workforce development efforts across Kansas.

Letter from the Executive Director



As we celebrate 40 years of service, I am reminded how deeply rooted we are in our mission and how consistently we have stayed true to our purpose. Today, our mission to advance early childhood care and education through an evidence-informed system of professional learning and support reflects both our history and our future.

Over the decades, KCCTO has grown from an in-person training initiative to a sophisticated, statewide professional development system. We serve the early childhood care and education workforce in all 105 Kansas counties, offering innovative learning opportunities and data-informed supports. Our work is built on a solid foundation shaped by decades of experience, relationships, and shared learning.

In recent years, we have continued to expand and strengthen that foundation. KCCTO has led initiatives such as the implementation of the Kansas Early Childhood Career Pathway, and we are proud to serve as the build and implementation partner for Cape, the Kansas Early Childhood Workforce Registry. Our ongoing commitment to providing accessible, high quality professional development remains central to our work, helping elevate the early childhood profession and supporting those who dedicate their lives to children and families.

KCCTO's strategic plan reinforces our focus on systems thinking. I believe every component of the work we do in early childhood must be approached through a systems lens. It is critical to understand the broader system and how each part influences the others for lasting impact and high-quality outcomes.

The word "opportunity" has defined us. Opportunities require awareness, creativity, courage, and belief in what we are pursuing. And within "opportunity" lies "unity," which perfectly captures what makes our work possible. Our team of more than 60 professionals across Kansas exemplifies that unity every day by supporting, educating, and advocating for those who care for young children and families. Through collaboration, flexibility, and innovation, we continue to embrace opportunities and strengthen our collective impact.

As we move toward our 40th anniversary, I am proud of what we have accomplished and inspired by what lies ahead. KCCTO remains grounded in our purpose, responsive to the needs of the workforce, and committed to ensuring that every child in Kansas has a strong foundation.



Patty Peschel Executive Director

Board of Directors

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Westat

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K-State Research and Extension

Jennifer Oborny
Early Childhood Special Education
Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center

Carla Russell
Family Group Home Owner

Melissa Schoenberger
Early Childhood System Specialist
Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund

Lisa Williams
Parents as Teachers Coordinator Kansas Department of Education

Grants Awarded

DATE	FUNDING SOURCE*	TOTAL AWARDED
JULY 1, 2024 - JUNE 30, 2025 (STATE FY'25)		
Infant Toddler Specialist Network (ITSN)	CCDF	$2,955,102
Workforce Professional Development (WPD)	CCDF	$4,228,161
Child Care Quality Improvement Support Services (CCQIS)	CCDF/subaward	$527,252
AUGUST 1, 2024 – JUNE 30, 2025		
Cape – Statewide Registry	CIF/CCDF	$1,555,595
OCTOBER 1, 2024 - SEPTEMBER 29, 2025 (FEDERAL FY'25)		
Technical Assistance	PDG, contractual	$101,930
Workforce Registry Build & Maintenance	PDG, contractual	$918,656

*CCDF = Child Care and Development Fund • CIF = Children Initiative Fund
PDG = Preschool Development Grant

Kansas' Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Landscape

KCCTO's 2024 Comprehensive Workforce Study

5,623
SURVEYS COMPLETED

39
FOCUS GROUPS

100%
REPRESENTATION FROM KANSAS COUNTIES

68%
REPORTED HAVING A COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

83%
INTERESTED IN ADDITIONAL TRAININGS, CERTIFICATIONS, OR ADVANCING THEIR DEGREE

Kansas has a strong vision for young children and families, clearly outlined in the *All In For Kansas Kids* (AIFKK) strategic plan. Data that informed the development of AIFKK reinforces the importance of investing early: research shows that investing in high-quality early childhood programs and services for children ages birth to five yields a 13% return on investment (ROI; García et al., 2016).[1] Early childhood education also strengthens families and can help break cycles of poverty, underscoring the long-term social and economic impact of these investments (García et al., 2016).[1]

A central priority of AIFKK is strengthening and stabilizing the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) workforce. Kansas' ECCE professionals remain deeply committed to children and families while navigating persistent challenges. Findings from KCCTO's 2024

Comprehensive Workforce Survey[2] of more than 5,500 professionals identified ongoing concerns related to compensation, benefits, workload,

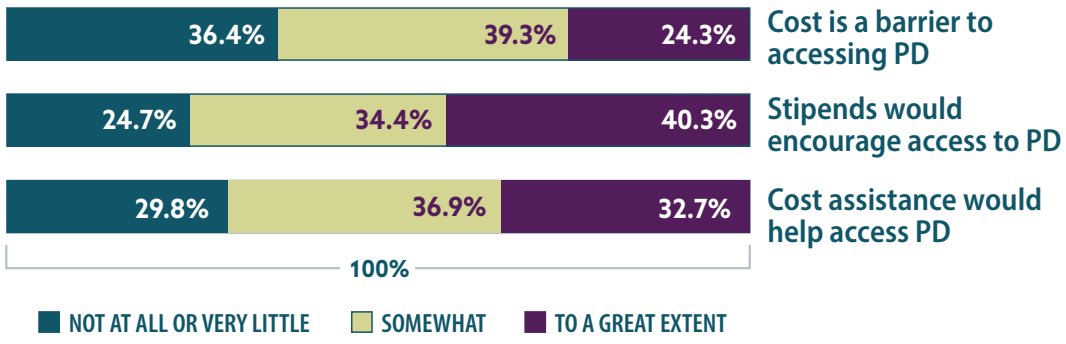
and limited career advancement, factors that directly affect workforce stability, program quality, and access to high-quality early learning, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

At the same time, the survey revealed strong motivation for growth, with 83% of respondents interested in additional training, certifications, or degree advancement, highlighting a critical opportunity to align workforce supports with educator aspirations.

[1] García, J. L., Heckman, J. J., Leaf, D. E., & Prados, M. J. (2016). The life-cycle benefits of an influential early childhood program. National Bureau of Economic Research. https://doi.org/10.3386/w22993

[2] Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (2024). Kansas Early Childhood Care and Education Comprehensive Workforce Study Report, Kansas State University. https://kccto.org/resources/your-voice-counts/

Professional Development (PD)[2]



"Stress and working upwards of 80 to 100 hours a week just trying to keep everything moving—it's exhausting, but there's a reason we do this."

–Participant in the Kansas ECCE Workforce Study[2]



"We can't really charge [parents enough] to be able to pay living wages or offer insurance or any of that [without risking pricing parents out of childcare]. So as much as I hate [recruitment and retention of staff] coming down to money, I really think that's what it comes down to."

–Participant in the Kansas ECCE Workforce Study[2]

All In For Kansas Kids

KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD Career Pathway

Kansas Department for Children and Families

ECCE professionals operate within a complex, mixed-delivery system, in which a coordinated system of early learning services are delivered through multiple provider types—including schools, child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start, and early intervention services, etc.—to support access for families across the community. This underscores the need for coordinated collaboration across state agencies, higher education, and professional development organizations. KCCTO plays a unique role in this system as a trusted connector, bridging state-level policy and the lived experiences of the workforce through training, coaching, and technical assistance.

In spring 2025, KCCTO's Kansas Career Pathway team translated workforce data into briefs and presentations shared during the Kansas legislative session at key events. By centering the voices and experiences of ECCE professionals, KCCTO helped illustrate how policy decisions directly influence recruitment, retention, and long-term workforce sustainability. Through this work, KCCTO serves as a vital bridge between ECCE professionals and decision-makers, ensuring Kansas' early childhood workforce is not only trained and supported, but also seen, heard, and represented in the decisions that shape the profession in Kansas.

KCCTO Response to ECCE Workforce Needs

Technical Assistance and Coaching

KCCTO delivers free, on-site and virtual coaching (Technical Assistance) to provide practical, tailored support that strengthens ECCE Professionals' capacity.

Individualized Professional Development Plans (IPDPs)

KCCTO supports professionals in using IPDPs to reflect on strengths, identify areas for growth, and set intentional professional goals.

Career Navigators

KCCTO provides individualized guidance, encouragement, and technical assistance to help early childhood professionals navigate career pathways and achieve their goals.

Scholarships

KCCTO reduces financial barriers by offering scholarships for training, conferences, higher education, and CDA credential attainment.

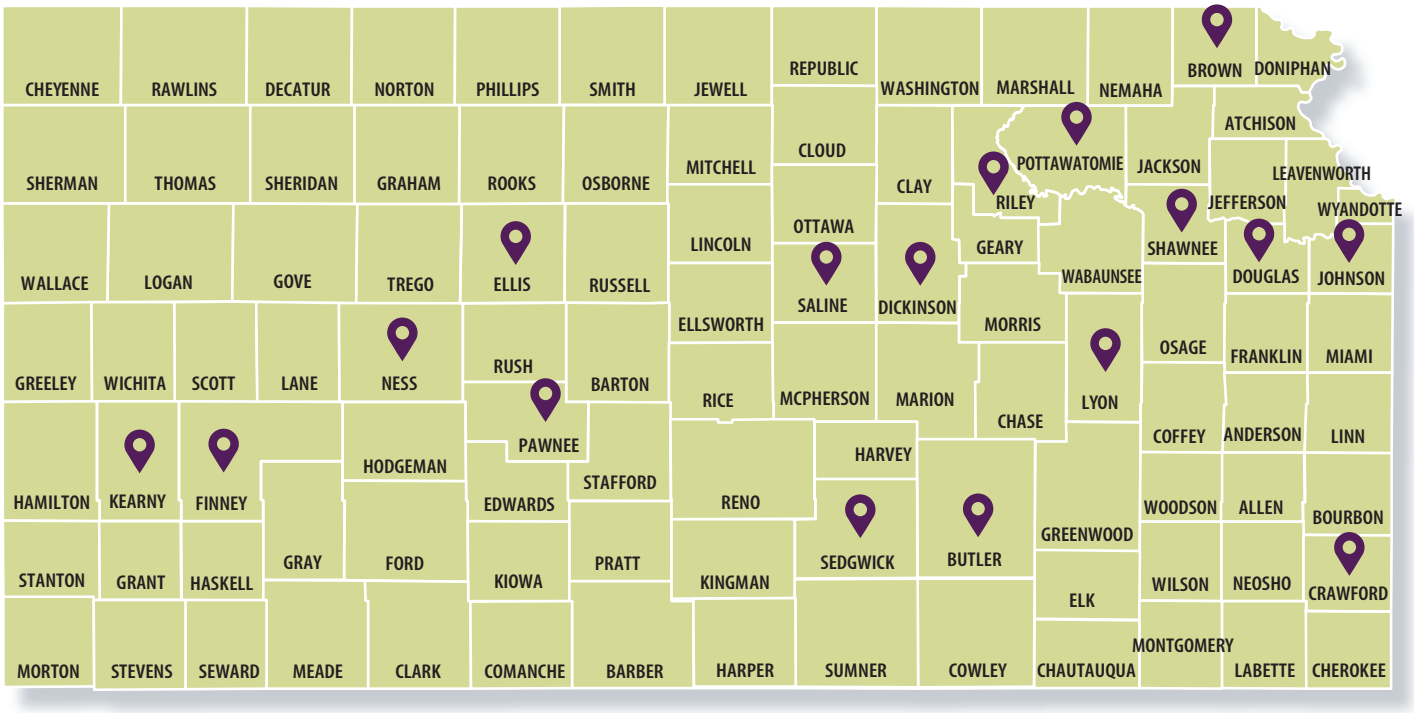
Below are key findings from the Kansas ECCE Comprehensive Workforce Study[2]

Key Findings	Opportunities
1 Recruitment **ECCE professionals enter the field because they are passionate about working with children (overall rated 4.5 on scale of 1 to 5).**	• Start recruitment in middle and high school through Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. • Expand apprenticeship programs and mentorship opportunities. • Recruit a workforce that reflects the children and families they serve.
2 Compensation and Benefits **Low wages create severe hardships for the ECCE workforce and impact recruitment and retention.** • 40-50% of ECCE professionals have a salary under $25,000. • FCC professionals are: older (over 50% are over 40); work longer in the field; 5% have health benefits through work; 5% have 401K.	• Prioritize locally assessed living wage as an essential component for building and sustaining our ECCE system. • Offer retirement preparation, specifically to the unique challenges of FCC professionals.
3 Higher Education and Professional Development **Highest level of education varies across the mixed-delivery system. Nearly 2/3 of FCC professionals have some college experience, 2-year, 4-year, or advanced degrees. Overall, nearly 2/3 show a moderate to extreme interest in advancing their degree. However, focus groups were divided citing lack of return on investment.**	• Institutions of higher education and professional development entities must tailor courses and education to meet the unique demands of the mixed-delivery system. • Provide more scholarship to support training, certifications, and advancing their degrees.
4 Supports for ECCE Workforce **ECCE professionals in Kansas provide care and education to young children and families within a complex, mixed-delivery system and need supports across agencies/departments.**	• Intentionally build a more cohesive and collaborative cross-sector system of supports for professional preparation and advancement of the ECCE workforce.

KCCTO Outreach & Impact

A dedicated team of professionals drive KCCTO's mission statewide.
Over 60 employees, including 11 new additions between June 1st, 2024 and July 30th, 2025, strengthen our capacity to serve early childhood professionals and programs. With staff located across Kansas, our geographic reach is a powerful asset—allowing us to provide meaningful outreach, timely in-person services, and responsive support tailored to local needs.

This statewide presence helps us build strong connections, foster relationships, and ensure that communities across Kansas feel supported, informed, and engaged in advancing high-quality early childhood systems.



JULY 2024 - JUNE 2025 IMPACT

41 New trainings developed

130,575 Clock hours awarded

379 High school students enrolled in initial health and safety training

12,400 Unique training participants

100% County representation

1,735 Coaching

139 Mentoring or peer to peer

2,251 Consultation

Achievement Highlights

Over the last fiscal year, KCCTO made major strides in building and launching Cape, the career and professional empowerment portal, Kansas' statewide early childhood professional registry. Development of Cape began in spring 2024 and quickly became a foundational investment in creating a more connected, accessible system for early childhood professionals across the state. As the project progressed, additional time and resources were committed to ensure the system could meet the needs of Kansas' early childhood workforce and support long-term sustainability.

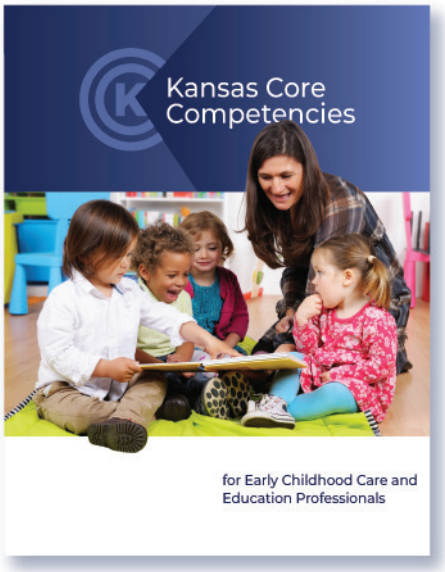
Cape launched in January 2025, a significant milestone in how early childhood professionals register for training and engage with professional learning opportunities. KCCTO transitioned from its previous registration system and began using Cape as the central platform for training registration. Throughout the year, additional partner organizations joined the system, expanding its reach statewide.

In its first six months, Cape saw strong adoption, with more than 7,600 professional profiles created and participation from every county in Kansas. To support awareness and ease of use, KCCTO staff delivered presentations across the state and launched the Cape Ambassador Program, which equips local volunteers, including K-State



Extension, to help peers create profiles and navigate the system. This community-based support model continues to grow and strengthen Cape's presence statewide.

Building Cape required significant effort across KCCTO. The demanding nature of the software build and implementation, paired with KCCTO's database being repurposed as the foundation of the registry, brought new hurdles. Staff across teams adapted to new processes, learned new systems, and responded to ongoing changes with flexibility and commitment. These efforts laid the groundwork for a registry that centers the needs of early childhood professionals and improves how Kansas connects training, career pathways, and system supports.



The Kansas Core Competencies for ECCE Professionals

The Kansas Core Competencies for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Professionals replaced the former Kansas/Missouri Core Competencies, creating a Kansas-specific framework that clearly defines the knowledge, skills, and professional practices needed to support high-quality early childhood care and education. This revision ensured the competencies reflect Kansas priorities (i.e., AIFKK), systems, and workforce needs, while providing a consistent foundation for professional growth and career development across the state.

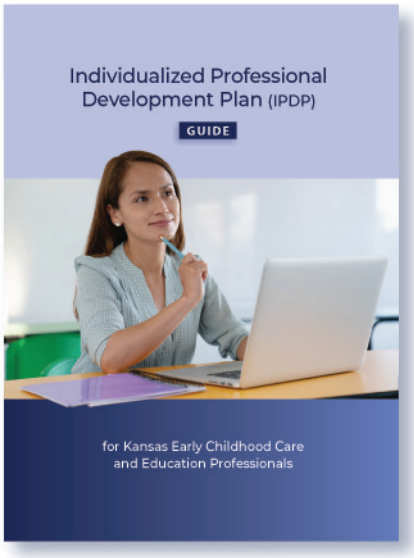
Following this development, KCCTO led statewide implementation efforts, distributing more than 12,300 printed copies in English and Spanish to licensed providers, public PreK programs, state agencies, and key partners. KCCTO and Child Care Aware of Kansas fully transitioned all state-approved courses to align with the Kansas Core Competencies and developed an introductory online course to support professionals new to the framework. In January 2025, the Core Competencies Workgroup moved from development into full implementation, marking a significant milestone in strengthening and unifying Kansas' early childhood workforce.

Individualized Professional Development Plan

The Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP) is a statewide tool designed to help early childhood professionals intentionally plan, track, and advance their professional growth. Launched in July 2024, the IPDP provides educators with a clear, personalized roadmap for building skills, meeting career goals, and aligning training with the Kansas Core Competencies. To ensure broad access, KCCTO developed and distributed both written and digital IPDP materials in English and Spanish.

In FY2025, KCCTO modeled the value of this tool by integrating the IPDP into its own professional practices, with 93% of KCCTO staff completing an IPDP and 521 plans in the statewide digital system. The broader workforce was supported through the Elevate Your Career asynchronous course, which walked participants step by step through creating and using an IPDP to support long-term career success.

To sustain and expand this effort, the Workforce Development Advisory Group (WDAG) established a dedicated subcommittee focused on distributing IPDP materials, encouraging workforce participation, and preparing for future integration of the IPDP into the Cape system. Career Navigators further strengthened this work beginning in February by providing targeted technical assistance focused on IPDP completion and career planning. In June, KCCTO expanded access by transforming the Elevate Your Career course to include in-person and live virtual options, increasing accessibility and supporting stronger engagement and completion across Kansas' early childhood workforce.



Scholarships

Throughout SFY25, KCCTO continued its strong commitment to fostering professional growth within the early childhood workforce by awarding nearly 700 scholarships to early childhood professionals across Kansas.

As part of the application process, each participant completed the required Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP), ensuring scholarship support was aligned with intentional career and learning goals.

These scholarships helped offset the cost of higher education, state and national conferences, in-service training, and required certifications such as First Aid and CPR. By easing the financial burden associated with these crucial educational experiences, the scholarships empowered participants to make significant progress toward their professional development goals.

For many, this support opened doors to accomplishments that might have otherwise been out of reach, enabling them to take part in transformative learning experiences that are essential for their growth and for positively impacting the children they serve.

Scholarships Awarded

51	CDA Application Fee Awards (20 CCDF Funds-31 Advance Pay Council Account)
32	CDA Training Track-KCCTO Training
65	Inservice
289	In-State Conference
9	National Conference
15	Higher Education
247	First Aid CPR
20	Director's Credentials

KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD Career Pathway

The Kansas early Childhood Career Pathway is a statewide framework designed to support early childhood professionals by clearly defining multiple, flexible routes for career advancement. It recognizes education, professional learning, credentials, licensure, and experience, while honoring diverse entry points into the field. The pathway promotes transparency and professionalization across the early childhood care and education system and supports workforce retention and long-term career growth. KCCTO served as the implementing organization, responsible for coordinating development, collecting feedback, and ongoing operationalization of the statewide Career Pathway.

The early childhood workforce played a central role in operationalizing the Career Pathway. Between May and June 2025, the Career Pathway team hosted 17 feedback sessions with 51 participants, including 15 direct workforce members, to refine the framework. Input from these sessions informed the development of a structured point system used to operationalize each component of the Pathway.

The point system was grounded in findings from the 2024 Kansas ECCE Comprehensive Workforce Study conducted as part of the implementation plan. Points are awarded across education, early childhood–specific professional learning (clock hours, credit hours, and technical assistance), credentials, endorsements, licensure, and experience. A credential rubric was developed to account for both required educational foundations and non-coursework activities. Real workforce scenarios were tested to ensure realistic advancement and informed Professional Achievement Level (PAL) point totals.

The Career Pathway is intentionally designed to support upward mobility and retention. Participants rarely move downward unless they leave the active workforce; experience is cumulative, and highest education and earned credit hours remain intact. Points may only be lost if clock hours or credentials lapse due to non-renewal. Workforce members reported improved ability to identify their PAL and explain the Pathway within their professional networks, and direct care professionals valued the recognition of experience and multiple advancement routes.

Revisions in 2024–2025 expanded the Career Pathway from levels P–8 to P–9, incorporating advanced degrees and additional certificates, credentials, and endorsements, including Kansas Association for Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health (KAIMH), Early Childhood Unified (ECU) licenses, and national accreditations. Experience recognition now extends beyond two years, aligned with workforce feedback and Cape data practices. Key initiatives included launching the Developmental Disabilities Certification Program with KU Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (LEND), advancing higher education collaboration, and hiring Career Navigators in January 2025 to guide professionals through career planning, higher education connections, and technical assistance.

Mental Health and Well-Being Supports

As part of KCCTO's broader commitment to supporting the early childhood workforce, KCCTO's Mental Health Cohort continues to make a strong impact.

KCCTO staff offered 44 sessions across 9 cohort groups, creating valuable opportunities for reflection, connection, and emotional resilience. In the most recent cycle (Groups 5 – 9, launched February 2025), 31 individuals participated, with 23 completing the post-group survey.

Key outcomes:

- 100% reported being very satisfied with the experience
- 96% agreed they know how to calm themselves when stressed at work
- 78% said they practice self-compassion at work

To further this work, four KCCTO team members completed Reflective Supervision training through Kansas Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (KAIMH) and will soon be endorsed to offer this support internally and to child care professionals across Kansas.

These efforts reflect broader trends in the field, with increased emphasis on provider well-being as fundamental to high quality care. KCCTO's strategic focus on mental health and reflective practice helps inform stakeholders, strengthen workforce supports, and position the organization for continued investment and growth.

Child Development Associate (CDA)® Credential

In SFY25, 32 individuals began the CDA training track, bringing the total number of active CDA participants to 123 individuals. CDA consultants provided ongoing support to individuals on a training track, including assistance with enrollments, transfers, and track changes. In addition, Consultants offered final technical assistance to individuals completing the training track, including guidance on submitting the Council for Professional Recognition CDA application, preparing for the CDA exam, and completing the verification visit.

Collaborations

At the heart of KCCTO's work is collaboration. Our impact is made possible through strong partnerships that span the entire state and connect local communities to a shared vision for Kansas' early childhood workforce. KCCTO works alongside state agencies, institutions of higher education, early intervention and mental health organizations, evaluation partners, and national training, accreditation, and leadership entities to ensure professional development across Kansas is aligned, accessible, and meaningful.

Through partnerships with statewide organizations such as Kansas Leadership Education in Neurodevelopment and Related Disabilities (LEND), Kansas Association for Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health (KAIMH), and Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition (KBC), and ongoing collaboration with regional and local partners, including Child Care Aware of Kansas regional offices, the Southwest Kansas Library System, and local Interagency Coordinating Councils (ICCs), KCCTO extends its reach into urban, rural, and frontier communities alike.

These collaborations strengthen access to high-quality, relevant training; support clearer and more connected career pathways; and promote coordinated systems of support for early childhood professionals.

Together, these partnerships reinforce KCCTO's role in connecting systems, aligning efforts, and strengthening the statewide infrastructure to better support Kansas' early childhood workforce.

"The work of supporting young children is never done alone. We are grateful to the Kansas early childhood professionals who dedicate their passion and expertise to this field each day. The children in your care will become our Kansas workforce, our parents, and our leaders. On behalf of the KCCTO team, it is a privilege to share your journey and support your work."

–Dr. Bronwyn Fees, Principal Investigator for KCCTO



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