



# Early Childhood Working Group

Member List and Contact Information

**Member:** Jeanne Ackerson  
**Title:** Public Affairs Specialist  
**Organization:** U.S. Department of Education  
**Address:** 1010 Walnut, Suite 452, Kansas City, MO, 64106  
**Phone:** (816) 268-0401  
**Email:** jeanne.ackerson@ed.gov  
**Organization Description:** Expanding access to high quality preschool for all children.

**Type of Organization as related to Early Childhood:** Policy/Advocacy for early childhood  
**Infant/ Early Childhood Issues of Interest for Working Group member:** Family engagement/education related to early childhood health and wellness

**Geographic area that you serve/work:** Missouri; Kansas

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**Member:** Carol Ayres  
**Title:** Early Education and Professional Development Specialist  
**Organization:** The Family Conservancy  
**Address:** 444 Minnesota Ave, Ste 200, Kansas City, KS, 66101  
**Phone:** (913) 742-4105  
**Email:** cayres@thefamilyconservancy.org  
**Organization Website:** www.thefamilyconservancy.org  
**Organization Social Media:** facebook.com/thefamilyconservancy; twitter.com/tfckc  
**Organization Description:** Supplemental food program providing nutrition education, nutritious foods, breastfeeding education and support, medical and social service referrals serving infants and children up to 5 years old.

**Type of Organization as related to Early Childhood:** Support or training organization for early childhood provider  
**Infant/ Early Childhood Issues of Interest for Working Group member:** Breastfeeding supports; Improving foods and beverages in early childhood settings; Improving physical activity in early childhood settings; Addressing child care wellness policies; Family engagement/education related to early childhood health and wellness; Approaches to reduce TV viewing time/screen time in early childhood.

**Geographic area that you serve/work:** Jackson County; Clay County; Platte County; Cass County; Johnson county; Wyandotte County; Kansas City Metro; Missouri; Kansas.

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**Member:** Katrina Ball  
**Title:** CCR&R Director  
**Organization:** The Family Conservancy     **Program:** Child Care Aware of Eastern KS and Western MO  
**Address:** 444 Minnesota Ave, Ste 200, Kansas City, KS, 66101  
**Phone:** (913) 342-1110  
**Email:** kball@thefamilyconservancy.org  
**Organization Website:** www.thefamilyconservancy.org

**Organization Social Media:** facebook.com/thefamilyconservancy; twitter.com/tfckc

**Organization Description:** Provide information, resources, training and technical assistance for child care providers to improve the quality of child care in our region. Also provide information for parents on how to access a list of child care providers to meet their needs.

**Type of Organization as related to Early Childhood:** Home visiting; Support or training organization for early childhood provider; Child Care Resource and Referral.

**Infant/ Early Childhood Issues of Interest for Working Group member:** Improving foods and beverages in early childhood settings; Improving physical activity in early childhood settings; Addressing child care wellness policies; Family engagement/education related to early childhood health and wellness; Approaches to reduce TV viewing time/screen time in early childhood.

**Geographic area that you serve/work:** Jackson County; Clay County; Platte County; Cass County; Johnson county; Wyandotte County; Kansas City Metro; Missouri; Kansas; Serve 23 Counties in MO and 4 in KS (Atchison, Leavenworth, Wyandotte and Johnson).

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**Member:** Joan DeCoursey, MS, RD, LD

**Title:** WIC Dietitian

**Organization:** Johnson County Health Department

**Address:** 6000 Lamar, Mission, KS, 66202

**Phone:** (913) 826-1216

**Email:** Joan.decoursey@jocogov.org

**Organization Website:** jocogov.org

**Organization Social Media:** facebook.com/jocogov; twitter.com/jocogov

**Organization Description:** Johnson County WIC clinic for low income pregnant women, new moms and infants and children up to age five. We have two clinics, one in Mission and one in Olathe; we provide nutrition education, referrals to other programs and grocery store vouchers for a variety of nutritious foods.

**Type of Organization as related to Early Childhood:** WIC

**Infant/ Early Childhood Issues of Interest for Working Group member:** Breastfeeding supports; Improving foods and beverages in early childhood settings; Improving physical activity in early childhood settings; Addressing child care wellness policies; Family engagement/education related to early childhood health and wellness; Approaches to reduce TV viewing time/screen time in early childhood; Improving access and policies of governmental programs, e.g., food stamps, WIC, HeadStart.

**Geographic area that you serve/work:** Johnson County

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**Member:** Rhonda Erpelding

**Title:** Child Care Specialist

**Organization:** American Heart Association      **Program:** Healthy Way to Grow

**Address:** 6800 W 93rd Street, Overland Park, KS, 66212

**Phone:** (319) 504-6963

**Email:** rhonda.erpelding@heart.org

**Organization Website:** <http://www.healthywaytogrow.org/>

**Organization Description:** Healthy Way to Grow is helping communities across the nation reverse the childhood obesity epidemic by supporting early care and education programs to improve practices and policies that will create healthier environments for young children. By helping centers achieve best

practice guidelines in nutrition, physical activity, screen time and infant feeding, we can help America's youngest children grow up healthy.

**Type of Organization as related to Early Childhood:** Community Health

**Infant/ Early Childhood Issues of Interest for Working Group member:** Breastfeeding supports; Improving foods and beverages in early childhood settings; Improving physical activity in early childhood settings; Addressing child care wellness policies; Family engagement/education related to early childhood health and wellness; Approaches to reduce TV viewing time/screen time in early childhood.

**Geographic area that you serve/work:** Johnson County; Wyandotte County.

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**Member:** Amanda Gress

**Title:**

**Organization:** Kansas Action for Children

**Address:** 720 SW Jackson Street Suite 201, Topeka, KS, 66603

**Phone:** (913) 961-8355

**Email:** amanda@kac.org

**Organization Website:** www.kac.org

**Organization Social Media:** facebook.com/ksaction Twitter: @KansasAction

**Organization Description:** Kansas Action for Children is a non-profit, non-partisan organization committed to improving the lives of Kansas children and families by providing comprehensive data, advocating for sound public policy and collaborating with lawmakers. Through support from individuals and private foundations, KAC has worked for more than 30 years to make our state the best place to live, work and raise a family.

**Type of Organization as related to Early Childhood:** Policy/Advocacy for early childhood

**Infant/ Early Childhood Issues of Interest for Working Group member:** Breastfeeding supports; Improving foods and beverages in early childhood settings; improving physical activity in early childhood settings; Family engagement/education related to early childhood health and wellness; Approaches to reduce TV viewing time/screen time in early childhood; Improving access and policies of governmental programs, e.g., food stamps, WIC, HeadStart.

**Geographic area that you serve/work:** Kansas

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**Member:** Maegan Nelson

**Title:** Educational Coordinator

**Organization:** Children's Mercy Hospital

**Address:** 610 E 22nd St, Kansas City, MO, 64108

**Phone:** (816) 234-9268

**Email:** menelson@cmh.org

**Organization Description:** Zoom to Health program for children ages 9 and younger and their parents; promoting healthy lifestyle changes, and physical activity.

**Type of Organization as related to Early Childhood:** Health Care

**Infant/ Early Childhood Issues of Interest for Working Group member:** Improving physical activity in early childhood settings; Family engagement/education related to early childhood health and wellness; Approaches to reduce TV viewing time/screen time in early childhood.

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**Geographic area that you serve/work:** Jackson County; Clay County; Platte County; Cass County; Johnson county; Kansas City Metro; Missouri; Kansas.

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**Member:** Beth Nichols

**Title:** Program Director

**Organization:** Growing Futures Early Education Center/Head Start of Shawnee Mission   **Program:** Early Head Start/Head Start

**Address:** 8155 Santa Fe Drive, Overland Park, KS, 66204

**Phone:** (913)649-9714

**Email:** bnichols@smks-headstart.org

**Organization Website:** www.growingfutureseec.org

**Organization Description:** Growing Futures Early Education Center offers Early Head Start, Head Start, and Community Child Care options for children 0-5 and their families. Enrolled families also have access to a variety of comprehensive support services that include health and nutrition services, mental health, dental health, family advocacy, and family engagement opportunities.

**Type of Organization as related to Early Childhood:** HeadStart; Home Visiting.

**Infant/ Early Childhood Issues of Interest for Working Group member:** Breastfeeding supports; Improving foods and beverages in early childhood settings; Improving physical activity in early childhood settings; Addressing child care wellness policies; Family engagement/education related to early childhood health and wellness; Approaches to reduce TV viewing time/screen time in early childhood; Improving access and policies of governmental programs, e.g., food stamps, WIC, HeadStart.

**Geographic area that you serve/work:** Johnson County

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**Member:** Nancy Sanchez

**Title:** Wyandotte County WIC Program Coordinator

**Organization:** Wyandotte County Public Health Department   **Program:** WIC

**Address:** 619 Ann Ave, Kansas City, KS, 66101

**Phone:** (913) 573-6721

**Email:** nsanchez@wycokck.org

**Organization Website:** wycokck.org

**Organization Description:** Supplemental food program providing nutrition education, nutritious foods, breastfeeding education and support, medical and social service referrals serving infants and children up to 5 years old.

**Type of Organization as related to Early Childhood:** WIC

**Infant/ Early Childhood Issues of Interest for Working Group member:** Breastfeeding supports; Improving foods and beverages in early childhood settings; Improving physical activity in early childhood settings; Addressing child care wellness policies; Family engagement/education related to early childhood health and wellness; Approaches to reduce TV viewing time/screen time in early childhood; Improving access and policies of governmental programs, e.g., food stamps, WIC, HeadStart.

**Geographic area that you serve/work:** Wyandotte County

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**Member:** Barbara Sansberry

**Title:** Health Coordinator

**Organization:** YMCA Head Start

**Address:** 3800 E 51st Street, Kansas City, MO, 64014  
**Phone:** (816) 886-4510  
**Email:** barbarasansberry@kansascityymca.org  
**Organization Description:** YMCA Head Start

**Type of Organization as related to Early Childhood:** HeadStart

**Infant/ Early Childhood Issues of Interest for Working Group member:** Breastfeeding supports; Improving foods and beverages in early childhood settings; Improving physical activity in early childhood settings; Addressing child care wellness policies; Family engagement/education related to early childhood health and wellness; Approaches to reduce TV viewing time/screen time in early childhood; Improving access and policies of governmental programs, e.g., food stamps, WIC, HeadStart.

**Geographic area that you serve/work:** Jackson County; Clay County; Platte County; Cass County; Kansas City Metro; Missouri.

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**Member:** Karen Sherbondy

**Title:** Special Projects Coordinator

**Organization:** University of Missouri Extension

**Program:** Family Nutrition Education Programs

**Address:** 10 E. 5th St., Suite 200, Kansas City, MO, 64106

**Phone:** (816) 482-5866

**Email:** sherbondyk@missouri.edu

**Organization Website:** extension.missouri.edu

**Organization Social Media:** Facebook- facebook.com/MUHESExtension;  
facebook.com/UniversityOfMissouriExtensionKC; facebook.com/MUNutritionforFamilies;  
facebook.com/LiveItwithMU; Twitter-MU Nutrition for Families Pinterest-FNEP

**Organization Description:** The Family Nutrition Education Programs (FNEP) bring the latest nutrition information to low-income Missourians. Extension specialists provide education and training to early childcare providers.

**Type of Organization as related to Early Childhood:** Support or training organization for early childhood providers; Nutrition Education

**Infant/ Early Childhood Issues of Interest for Working Group member:** Improving foods and beverages in early childhood settings; Improving physical activity in early childhood settings; Family engagement/education related to early childhood health and wellness; Approaches to reduce TV viewing time/screen time in early childhood; Improving access and policies of governmental programs, e.g., food stamps, WIC, HeadStart.

**Geographic area that you serve/work:** Missouri

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**Member:** Christi Smith

**Title:** Project Director

**Organization:** Child Care Aware of Kansas

**Address:** 1712 NE 82nd Terrace

Kansas City, MO. 64118

**Phone:** (816)645-0550

**Email:** christi@ks.childcareaware.org

**Organization Website:** www.ks.childcareaware.org

**Organization Description:** We are the child care resource and referral state network agency and have four regional offices to support child care providers and families.

**Type of Organization as related to Early Childhood:**

-Support or training organization for early childhood providers;

**Infant/ Early Childhood Issues of Interest for Working Group member:** Breastfeeding supports; Improving foods and beverages in early childhood settings; Improving physical activity in early childhood settings; Addressing child care wellness policies; Family engagement/education related to early childhood health and wellness; Approaches to reduce TV viewing time/screen time in early childhood; Improving access and policies of governmental programs, e.g., food stamps, WIC, HeadStart.

**Geographic area that you serve/work:** Kansas

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**Member:** Lisa R Smith, RN

**Title:** Public Health Nurse

**Organization:** Clay County Public Health Center  
Management

**Program:** WIC, Immunizations, Prenatal Case

**Address:** 800 Haines Drive, Liberty, MO, 64068

**Phone:** (816) 595-4304

**Email:** lsmith@clayhealth.com

**Organization Website:** www.clayhealth.com

**Organization Description:** Provide education and certifications in the WIC supplemental nutrition program for pregnant and postpartum women, breastfeeding education and support, infants and children up to age 5 years. Prenatal Case Manager and Immunizations nurse.

**Type of Organization as related to Early Childhood:** WIC, Home Visiting; Health Care.

**Infant/ Early Childhood Issues of Interest for Working Group member:** Breastfeeding supports; Improving foods and beverages in early childhood settings; Family engagement/education related to early childhood health and wellness; Improving access and policies of governmental programs, e.g., food stamps, WIC, HeadStart.

**Geographic area that you serve/work:** Clay County

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**Member:** Liz Smith

**Title:** Head Start Director

**Organization:** Mid America Regional Council

**Address:** 600 Broadway Blvd. Suite 200, Kansas City, MO, 64105

**Phone:** (816) 701-8348

**Email:** lsmith@marc.org

**Organization Website:** marc.org

**Organization Description:** MARC is a regional planning organization operating several departments including the Department of Early Learning. Within this department MARC operates the Metropolitan Council on Early Learning and the Head Start Grant for Clay, Platte and Jackson Counties.

**Type of Organization as related to Early Childhood:** HeadStart; Support or training organization for early childhood providers; Policy/Advocacy for early childhood.

**Infant/ Early Childhood Issues of Interest for Working Group member:** Breastfeeding supports; Improving foods and beverages in early childhood settings; Improving physical activity in early childhood

settings; Addressing child care wellness policies; Family engagement/education related to early childhood health and wellness; Approaches to reduce TV viewing time/screen time in early childhood; Improving access and policies of governmental programs, e.g., food stamps, WIC, HeadStart.

**Geographic area that you serve/work:** Jackson County; Clay County; Platte County; Cass County; Kansas City Metro; Missouri.

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**Member:** Mark Van Blaricum

**Title:** Owner

**Organization:** Habits Your Way LLC

**Address:** 302 NW Rockhill Circle, Lees Summit, MO, 64081

**Phone:** (913)961-0088

**Email:** mvb22222@gmail.com

**Organization Website:** www.pitaforgood.com

**Organization Social Media:** facebook.com/pitaforgood; @pitaforgood

**Organization Description:** Habits Your Way LLC was formed for the purpose of educating the public (all ages) on the importance of establishing healthy eating habits. To that end, the Pita For Good food truck, owned by Habits Your Way LLC will open for business in April 2016. Pita For Good will offer fresh, affordable, from scratch Mediterranean food around the Kansas City Metro Area, thereby introducing new flavors and whole foods to adults and kids who may not have tried Mediterranean food before.

**Type of Organization as related to Early Childhood:** Wellness business; food truck

**Infant/ Early Childhood Issues of Interest for Working Group member:** Improving foods and beverages in early childhood settings; Addressing child care wellness policies; Family engagement/education related to early childhood health and wellness; Approaches to reduce TV viewing time/screen time in early childhood.

**Geographic area that you serve/work:** Jackson County; Kansas City Metro.

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**Member:** Heather M Waterfield

**Title:** Early Education Professional Development Specialist

**Organization:** The Family Conservancy

**Address:** 444 Minnesota Ave, Ste 200, Kansas City, KS, 66101

**Phone:** (913)342-1110

**Email:** hwaterfield@thefamilyconservancy.org

**Organization Website:** www.thefamilyconservancy.org

**Organization Description:** Professional Development and coaching of early childhood programs to support best practices in ECE.

**Type of Organization as related to Early Childhood:** Support or training organization for early childhood providers

**Infant/ Early Childhood Issues of Interest for Working Group member:** Breastfeeding supports; Improving foods and beverages in early childhood settings; Improving physical activity in early childhood settings; Addressing child care wellness policies; Family engagement/education related to early childhood health and wellness; Approaches to reduce TV viewing time/screen time in early childhood; Improving access and policies of governmental programs, e.g., food stamps, WIC, HeadStart.

**Geographic area that you serve/work:** Jackson County; Clay County; Platte County; Cass County; Johnson county; Wyandotte County; Kansas City Metro; Missouri; Kansas; Leavenworth County; Ray County.

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