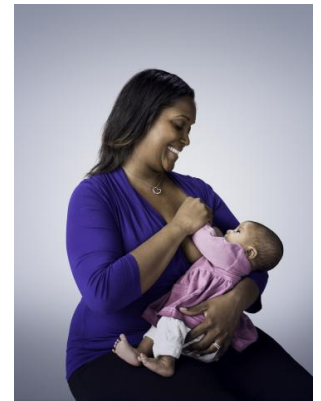


Success Story

Promoting Healthy Practices in Early Care and Education through Breastfeeding Support in Kansas

Background

Research shows that breastfeeding has significant benefits for young children, including lowering the risk of obesity and various childhood illnesses. While the percentage of babies ever breastfed in Kansas (88%) is greater than the national average (84%), only 32% of Kansas babies were breastfed exclusively through age six months as recommended ([CDC National Immunization Survey 2019](#)). With nearly 24,000 children ages 0-2 in early care and education (ECE) programs in the state, Child Care Aware of Kansas (CCAKS) saw a great opportunity to promote breastfeeding and support ECE programs to facilitate this healthy practice for mothers and babies. In collaboration with the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition (KBC) and their Child Care Section—a member group of the coalition focused specifically on child care— CCAKS developed the [Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Toolkit](#) in 2020. The toolkit guides ECE programs through the process to be recognized as a Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Provider. This designation lets parents and community members know the ECE program is committed to national breastfeeding and infant feeding standards.



Kansas ECE providers have found the toolkit useful and there are currently 36 Breastfeeding Friendly child care programs in the state. Parents whose children are enrolled in Breastfeeding Friendly designated programs have shared positive feedback about the breastfeeding support they now receive.



"I have an 8-year-old son, and a now 22-month-old daughter. The groundwork that [the previous director] set in place many years ago, allowed me nothing but success in breastfeeding my daughter on site...nearly two years and a whole pandemic later, I can say we are still breastfeeding strong, and we are generally healthy as can be!"

– Jordan McKnight, Parent and Director, Hope Lutheran Early Learning Center

"The [center] welcomes moms to come down on their breaks to nurse their babies in a private and comfortable area. Knowing I was going to be able to nurse my son at noon almost every day helped ease the transition of having to go back to a full-time job."

–Brandy Thornton, Parent, Ellsworth Childcare and Learning Center

"Having a daycare provider who worked with me to provide my little ones with breastmilk, even when I couldn't directly be there, was very empowering.

I was able to save money, help my child grow, and be a working mother without compromise or stress."

–Katie, Parent, Desiree's Child Care



The toolkit has even garnered national reception and was referenced in the report, "[Breastfeeding Babies Are Welcome Here: Creating Breastfeeding-Friendly Child Care in New Jersey](#)," developed by Advocates for Children New Jersey, New Jersey Breastfeeding Coalition, and Reinvestment Fund.

ECE Breastfeeding resources

In addition to the toolkit, CCAKS and the KBC provide training and additional resources to support breastfeeding in ECE settings across the state. Training includes a two-hour course created by the KBC for ECE providers, *How to Support Breastfeeding Mothers & Families*, that has been delivered to more than 5,000 ECE providers since it was developed in 2013. Resources include the following reference materials for ECE providers:

- [Breastfeeding Support in the Child Care Setting](#)
- [Supporting the Breastfed Infant During Emergencies in the Child Care Setting](#)

Since launching the toolkit, CCAKS and the KBC continue to promote these resources with ECE providers and stakeholders across the state such as Kansas All in for Kansas Kids and Child Care Health Consultant Network staff. CCKS has identified several additional opportunities to integrate the Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care designation into other ECE systems within the state. In partnership with the KBC, CCAKS is currently working to:

- Incorporate health and safety standards related to breastfeeding into the Kansas Quality Improvement & Rating System, Links to Quality (L2Q),
- Integrate breastfeeding into the Child Care Health Consultant (CCHC) Network to share resources with nurses and consultants providing support services to children and families across the state,
- Support all 21 Early Head Start sites in Kansas to receive the designation by the end of 2022,
- Develop state and local connections by having CCAKS team members join community coalitions, and
- Train clinical staff to better understand the demands of the ECE environment and identify opportunities to support them.
- Translate the Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Designation application, the Frequently Asked Questions document and the Breastfeeding Toolkit to Spanish.
- Work with partners providing the “How to Support Breastfeeding Mothers and Families” training to have it translated to Spanish.

CCAKS continues to emphasize the importance of breastfeeding to promote healthy habits for young children and continues to explore opportunities to extend the reach of these resources.

To learn more

To learn more about this success story, please contact Kris Nicholson at kris.nicholson@ks.childcareaware.org or to learn more about HKHF TAP, e-mail hkhftap@nemours.org.

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