

**Pandemic-era funding ending for
childcare providers in Kansas**

The Century Foundation estimates the funding loss could cost Kansas nearly 1,500 child care programs.

By [KWCH Staff](#) and [Shawn Loging](#)

Published: Sep. 28, 2023 at 8:49 PM CDT

[Share on Facebook](#) [Email This Link](#) [Share on Twitter](#) [Share on Pinterest](#) [Share on LinkedIn](#)

WICHITA, Kan. (KWCH) - As providers and parents of young kids know, there simply isn't enough child care available to meet the need. It's a problem that could get worse in Kansas and across the country.

The **Federal Child Care Stabilization Fund**, called sustainability grants in Kansas, ends Saturday. Allocated through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), some \$300 million went to support providers.

TOP Early Learning Centers Cornelia Stevens said the directive was to make sure staff were being paid during the pandemic.

"To make sure that the providers, the people caring for children so that parents can work were able to continue to make a living," said Stevens.

Kids World Childcare Center Director Margo Jones said she gets several phone calls daily regarding a need for child care. She said the grants helped provide for the kids.

"It gave a little leeway. A little assistance with helping with all of those necessities that we have to put forth for the kids," she said.

Stevens said, "The directive was to make sure we're paying staff. To make sure that the providers, the people caring for children so that parents can work, were able to continue to make a living."

The **Century Foundation** estimates that ending the program could cost Kansas nearly 1,500 child care programs.

While Kids World Childcare Learning Center and TOP Early Learning Centers were among the thousands of childcare programs in Kansas that received the grants, both said they'll be okay beyond September 30.

Stevens said, "We were fortunate with our executive team worked to make sure that we received grants, donations, etc to be able to continue to sustain our program. We're very fortunate that our enrollment has kicked back up to where it was pre-pandemic."

Stevens said that's not the case for others. She serves as the co-chair of the Kansas Early Childhood Transition Task Force, which is looking at ways to support children and families.

"There are providers making hard decisions on whether or not they can continue to keep their doors open. We know that in Kansas, there is already a shortage of childcare," said Stevens.

Back at Kids World, Jones and her daughter, Cieara, said they are doing what they can to address the need by doubling their space, which will allow them to serve more than 100 children. Right now, they're at 59. a

"We're very excited about expanding and welcoming in all of these children around Wichita who are really needing that care," said Cieara.

Margo said, "Awarded grant for expansions to make our center state of the art. Hoping to open by December to get kids in here."

With a significant focus on child care, the hope is that more can be done.

"Because without successful childcare programs, it is very difficult to have a thriving economy," said Stevens.

Child Care Aware of Kansas, which administered the sustainability grants, said the last of the funds were dispersed to Kansas providers in May. The group is tracking the impact to providers and said it has already recorded an increase in the number of providers closing and at a higher rate than in the past.

Copyright 2023 KWCH. All rights reserved. To report a correction or typo, please email news@kwch.com