

BUILDING BLOCKS *for the Future:*

BACKGROUND

With a vision of “Success in the Early Years: Building Blocks for the Future,” the Success By 6 Coalition has worked since 1998 to promote the well being of Douglas County’s young children and their families, with an emphasis on support for families and expansion of high quality out-of-home child care and early education.

Through funding from Smart Start Kansas (tobacco settlement funds) and Safe Schools Healthy Students (in partnership with USD 497), a home-based Family Resource Team has provided intensive services to 70 overburdened families annually. Seed money has been provided for childcare expansions at Edgewood public housing complex, Lawrence High School, and Haskell Indian Nations University, to add over 60 childcare slots for children under 6. Initiatives have been implemented to improve the quality and safety of out-of-home childcare and to promote public awareness of the importance of early childhood.

In 2003, the Kansas Children’s Cabinet encouraged Smart Start grantees, such as the Success By 6 Coalition of Douglas County, to engage their community in the development of a comprehensive early childhood plan.

Douglas County Comprehensive Early Childhood Plan EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PLANNING PROCESS

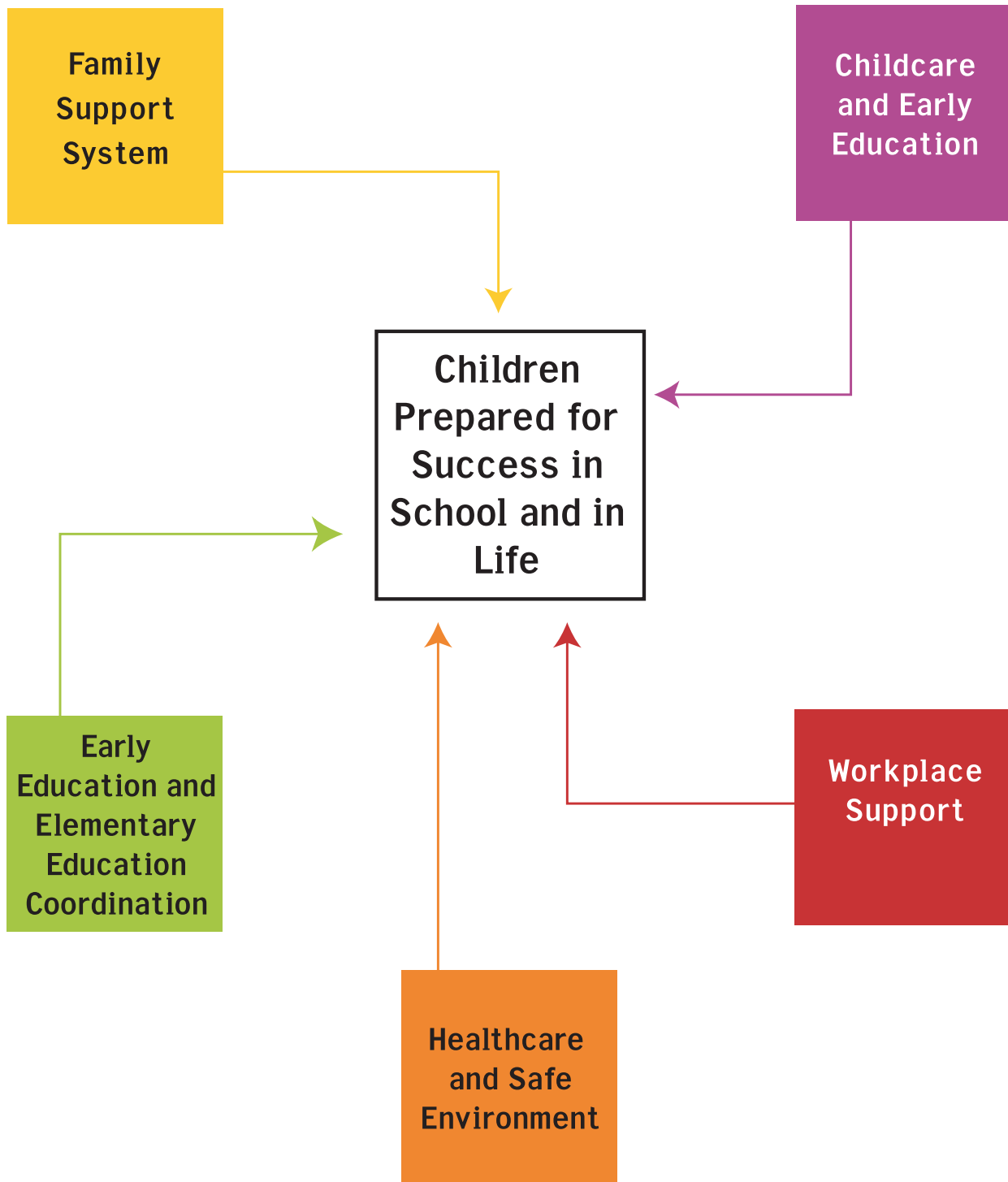
A broad array of community stakeholders developed the framework of the comprehensive plan in a day long planning retreat on April 30, 2004. Subsequently, the Coalition convened three focus groups to solicit input from those with professional knowledge and first-hand experience to develop potential activities for implementing the plan. The top five identified priority action areas are listed below.

TOP 5 PRIORITIES

for Early Childhood Identified by Community Planning Process.

1. The basic needs of families and children are met through a comprehensive, coordinated, collaborative, accessible family support system.
2. High quality, accessible, affordable childcare and early education is available to all families.
3. Universal, local access to healthcare services (physical, emotional and oral health) and safe environments are assured for pregnant women and children.
4. Children enter school socially, emotionally and cognitively ready to learn.
5. The workplace supports families.

Douglas County Comprehensive Early Childhood Plan *Components*



INFRASTRUCTURE

Douglas County Comprehensive Early Childhood Plan

Goals & Indicators

Family Support System Goal: The basic needs of families and children are met through a comprehensive, coordinated, collaborative, accessible family support system.

- Families receive necessary services based on valid professional evaluation
- Children live in families that can afford basic necessities
- Families' childcare transportation problems are addressed
- Families have affordable housing
- Families have supportive social structures

Childcare and Early Learning Goal: High quality, accessible, affordable childcare and early education is available to all families.

- Family childcare costs are affordable
- Quality of early childhood education is high
- Families make well-informed choices about early childhood education
- Salaries and benefits for ECE teachers are adequate
- Capacity of early childhood education providers is sufficient
- Children's social, emotional and developmental progress is age appropriate

Healthcare and Safe Environment Goal: Universal, local access to healthcare services (physical, emotional, and oral health) and safe environments are assured for pregnant women and children.)

- Pregnant women have access to healthcare services
- Mothers are high school graduates
- Children have regular access to physical health services
- Children have regular access to dental care
- Children have access to needed mental health services
- Pregnant women and children live in safe environments

Early Education and Elementary Education Coordination Goal: Children enter school socially, emotionally, and cognitively ready to learn.

- Early education childhood is aligned with kindergarten curriculum and instruction
- ECE teachers and providers have the training, knowledge and skills to encourage and enhance children's learning

Workplace Support Goal: The workplace supports working families.

- Employers accommodate needs of families
- Employers financially support early childhood centers

Infrastructure Goal: Success by 6 or equivalent community group has the capacity to facilitate communication and joint planning among agencies and providers serving young children and their families

- The community has increased capacity to implement Comprehensive Early Childhood Plan
- Success by 6 grant writer/coordinator and administrative support positions are created.
- Community partners are satisfied with progress in implementing the Comprehensive Early Childhood Plan

NEXT STEPS

Implementation groups will be convened for each Plan Component. The groups will review the potential activities specific to that component as identified in the planning process. The implementation groups will develop and implement specific action plans.

Please join in the implementation of this Comprehensive Early Childhood Plan by contacting the **Success By 6 Coalition at 842-8719** or successby6@sunflower.com to indicate your area of interest.

View the complete plan with potential activities at www.douglascountysuccessby6.org

PARTICIPANTS IN PLANNING PROCESS

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Sue Givens, Lawrence Memorial Hospital
Susan Gile, Lawrence SRS
Tawnya Johnson, Lawrence Chamber of Commerce



CONCLUSION

The Success By 6 Coalition is grateful for the planning grant from Smart Start Kansas. Support of the planning process enabled the completion of this comprehensive plan and provided the opportunity to engage stakeholders throughout the County. The planning process further strengthened collaborative relationships and prompted the initiation of others. The needs of families and children will only be met by focusing the attention of multiple, diverse stakeholders at the local level with support from the State through coordinated, collaborative efforts.



Well On Our Way



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