



# BRIGHTER BEGINNINGS

Year 1 Review of Reno County Child Care Task Force

2023-2024

## CHILDCARE AFFECTS EVERY SINGLE PERSON IN RENO COUNTY.

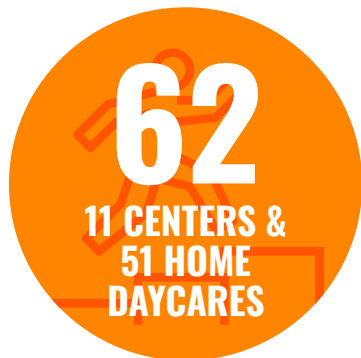
A lack of accessible, affordable, quality childcare leaves the workforce understaffed, parents overwhelmed, and the economy suffering.

The Reno County Child Care Task Force serves as a beacon of education, innovation, and solutions to childcare providers in our county and the surrounding regions. We are nimble, proactive, and open to new ideas and partnerships with a focus on data-driven, conscientious decision-making.

Over the past year, we've been on a mission to revolutionize the childcare system in Reno County—a region grappling with a substantial shortage in childcare availability—with an urgent need for approximately 1,800 additional slots.

**THE INVESTMENT:** With generous backing from Reno County and the City of Hutchinson, we are deploying over \$6.2 million to innovate and strengthen the childcare framework in our region. By revolutionizing childcare, we are not only alleviating substantial workforce barriers but also contributing to the development of a resilient and prosperous economy.

**We're proud to share the progress we've made in the first year of our initiative, on our way to forging a future where quality childcare is accessible to all, and where every family can thrive!**



PROVIDERS  
SUPPORTED



ADDITIONAL GRANT  
FUNDING RECEIVED



IN HOME DAYCARE  
PROVIDERS

# EXISTING PROVIDER SUPPORT

## RETENTION GRANTS

These quarterly grants are designed to focus, retain, and enhance and/or expand an organization's existing programs and services. In addition, a secondary purpose of the Retention Grants is to collect data that will reveal the true cost of care for providers across all licensing types. All of the information provided will help the Reno County Child Care Task Force track the impact of ARPA funds and generate strategies to support the childcare system long-term.

**GRANT DOLLARS DISBURSED: \$694,100**  
**PROVIDERS SERVED: 46**



**NEW IN 2024 – INFANT INCENTIVE PROGRAM:** The Retention Grants data revealed a clear trend: both home providers and daycare centers face an annual loss of approximately \$5,200 per infant care spot. In response, the Reno County Child Care Task Force has introduced the Infant Incentive Program, offering additional financial assistance to providers who care for infants.



*I met with a Financial Advisor to see if there was any hope of ever retiring. He gave me some strategies, but told me quite frankly, 'You need to raise your rates.' I told him that wasn't an option, that people in Hutch just can't afford it. But the costs of home repairs, supplies, and everything else have risen so much. I didn't know what I could do. The retention grants have been a blessing! Those funds and the promise of continued support and help were my deciding factor to continue my daycare.*

**TERESA STARKS, CHILDCARE PROVIDER**



## RENO COUNTY CHILDCARE PROJECTS



### KEY

**PROGRAM FUND RECIPIENTS**

**ACCELERATOR GRANT PROJECTS**

## ACCELERATOR GRANTS

In 2023, the task force received two grants: the Child Care Capacity Accelerator Grant and an Innovative Communities Grant. Funded by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Kansas Office of Recovery, these funds are intended to boost local childcare capabilities and were invested in eight crucial projects across Reno County.

**ADDITIONAL GRANT FUNDS RECEIVED:**

**\$2,292,014**

**CHILDCARE SLOTS ANTICIPATED:**

**350+**

PROJECTS AWARDED	
Hutchinson USD 308	Plans to expand the current child care program at a new location that will both increase slots as well as provide year-round daycare services to children aged birth through 5 years old.
Buhler USD 313	Renovating spaces at Buhler Grade School and a purchased property located at 56th and Plum to serve an additional 90 children from birth to 3.
Central Christian Preschool & Child Care	Plans in the works to renovate an existing building into a childcare center. Hired part-time staff and acquired essential equipment to accommodate seven more full-day children, including those with special needs.
City of Pretty Prairie	The city has purchased a home, which is being turned into a duplex to house two group home daycares.
Abundant Life Child Care & Preschool	Expanding into unused space within their current building and upgrading existing resources.
Haven USD 312	Renovated two existing facilities (one in Haven, one in Yoder) creating additional slots for 6 infants, 10 toddlers, and 18 3- and 4-year-olds.
Nickerson USD 309	Plans to establish a district-wide daycare program utilizing current facilities in South Hutchinson and Nickerson, providing year-round daycare services for up to 57 children aged birth through 5 years old.

**BRIDGING THE GAP:** An additional **\$1 MILLION** in ARPA funds is allotted to help with gap funding for Accelerator Grant Projects.



*We found out about the funds in June of 2023 and were able to open the two centers by August of 2023. We had such a quick turnaround because we already had the space and we just needed to do renovations. We were immediately full with a waitlist. That tells you how big of a need there was.*

**MEGAN HETT**

Director of Learning Services, Haven USD 312

*We are blessed to have been the recipient of more funds to expand our preschool and childcare offerings. We are thrilled anytime we are able to service more students and families and are grateful for the efforts of others to bring excellent childcare solutions to Reno County.*

**DR. JOHN WALKER**

Superintendent, Central Christian School

# WORKFORCE ASSISTANCE

The Reno County Child Care Task Force has been working in conjunction with Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO), Reno County Health Department, ESSDACK, and Child Care Aware of Kansas to host local quarterly training for childcare providers.

These free, quality trainings attracted providers from six counties in the region. Throughout the four training courses, providers earned a grand total of **1,368 hours** of continuing education credit.

Not only is the training free, but Reno County providers also received an **additional incentive of \$15/hour** for every hour of training completed—with a total of **\$20,500 distributed to providers**.

DATE OF TRAINING	ATTENDEES
September 29, 2023	34
November 11, 2023	65
January 13, 2024	57
March 2, 2024	76



## ATTENDEE SURVEYS INDICATED PARTICIPATING PROVIDERS WERE HIGHLY SATISFIED WITH THE TRAININGS:

*“I’m not alone! And other childcare providers know how and what I am feeling.”*

*“It makes me a much better provider.”*

*“Denise (CPR & 1st Aid Trainer) was the best I have EVER had in a CPR class! The most informative and best information! I will return to see her, she was awesome.”*

*“Bringing providers together, working together as one. We all have the same goal.”*

*“More recognition about childcare is being brought to people who can make a difference and also the community in general.”*

*“Beth Reeder is exceptional!”*



Beth Reeder presents a session to providers, “Let Them Have Dirt.”



Julia Kallas explains emergency preparedness



# SPREADING THE WORD

To raise awareness about the ongoing efforts, the Reno County Child Care Task Force has organized a range of events and activities, utilizing a variety of communication channels.

**WEBSITE:** Launched in 2023, the website, [renocountychildcare.com](https://renocountychildcare.com), is a wealth of information for providers, families, businesses, and community members. It covers a wide array of topics, from steps to become a childcare provider and upcoming training sessions, to available grant opportunities, a link to the childcare waitlist, and why it makes good business sense to invest in childcare.

*Coming Spring 2024 – Online Provider Directory*

## PROVIDER RECOGNITION:

To show gratitude and appreciation for the incredible work childcare providers do, the task force is coordinating several appreciation events and activities throughout the year.

**APPRECIATION GIFTS:** The task force has arranged for all providers and childcare staff in Reno County to receive occasional appreciation gifts. Most recently this included a free beverage from HTeaO.

**APPRECIATION EVENTS:** An event celebrating Provider Appreciation was held in May 2023, aligning with National Childcare Provider Appreciation Day. The festivities are set to continue with another gathering scheduled for this upcoming May.



“A little bit of appreciation goes a long way for providers. It might not seem like much to others, but it can make someone’s day, week, or even month. These providers work so hard—long hours and low pay—to care for our youngest citizens. They deserve as much appreciation as we can give!”

## HEATHER FAULKNER

Director, Abundant Life Childcare and Preschool

## PROVIDER OF THE MONTH

Formalized in early 2024, the Provider of the Month highlights a local provider who was nominated by a parent, coworker, or community member for their commitment to the families they serve, and the dedication they’ve shown to their profession.

“I love the relationships I’ve built with the families. After being a teacher, I knew I would love the relationship with the kids, but the families, I just love them. They’ve become some of our best friends. There have been some really hard times that the families have gone through, and really good times, and to be together through those times has been really good.”

## MARGARET BROCK

March Provider of the Month



# ON THE HORIZON

## New Business Model to Help Improve the Childcare System

Reno County's childcare issues cannot be tackled by providers alone. To truly revolutionize the system, it will take a sophisticated organization with resources and vision. The Reno County Child Care Task Force will launch a new childcare cooperative to improve the sustainability of these efforts. We are re-inventing the childcare industry by using data and knowledge, sharing services, and operating with maximum efficiency.



**Through market study and data analysis we have determined that strategic investments should focus on five key areas:**

### **CENTRALIZED MANAGEMENT**

Operational, financial, and regulatory complexities are managed more efficiently, allowing providers to focus on childcare

### **STANDARDIZATION OF PRACTICES**

Uniform standards for training, quality, and facilities that ensures consistent, high-quality care across all providers

### **ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY**

Leverage scale to manage costs, secure funding, and provide better pay and benefits, making the system financially sustainable

### **SCALABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY**

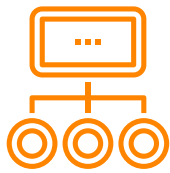
Easier expansion or contraction of services and facilities, responding to community needs and opportunities

### **COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT FOR PROVIDERS**

Full range of benefits, professional development, and centralized services to reduce the burden on individual providers and attract quality staff

Providers and centers interested in engaging with the childcare cooperative will have a variety of options to choose from. Through the cooperative, providers will gain access to a wide array of services and programs.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL SERVICES AVAILABLE:**



**CHILDCARE  
MANAGEMENT  
SYSTEM**



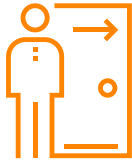
**SUBSTITUTE  
POOL**



**ORIENTATION**



**HEALTHCARE  
BENEFITS**



**RETIREMENT  
BENEFITS**



**EDUCATION  
RESOURCES**



**BULK  
PURCHASING**



**HIRING/  
INTERVIEWING/  
EMPLOYMENT**



**PAYROLL**



**OPERATIONS/  
POLICIES/  
PROCEDURES**



**REGULATIONS**

## **CHILDCARE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE:**

**INFANT  
INCENTIVE**

**START-UP  
ASSISTANCE**

**EMERGENCY  
FUNDS**

**PROVIDER  
GATHERINGS**



# THE BEST IS YET TO COME

We've accomplished a lot this past year, and with the behind-the-scenes strategic groundwork we've laid, we're poised for even more success in the years to come. Through community partnerships, data-gathering, conscientious decision-making, and continued investment, the childcare system in Reno County will continue to be a model for other communities statewide. Much like raising a child, the work doesn't happen overnight. It's a major investment that pays off years down the road from the day-to-day work.

**BUT IS INCREDIBLY WORTH IT IN THE END.**

Follow along with the progress being made by visiting our website:  
**[RENOCOUNTYCHILDCARE.COM](https://renocountychildcare.com)**