

# Federal COVID Relief Funding

## What Kansas Received for Child Care

February 1, 2023

As COVID-19 spread through Kansas and the country, access to child care came into the spotlight. The Kansas workforce found themselves without child care and unable to return to work because providers closed or restricted enrollment.

To address the shortage of child care providers exacerbated by the pandemic, Congress allocated funding to each state specifically designated for child care. Out of the roughly \$50 billion approved by the federal government, Kansas received \$468 million in three phases.

Coronavirus Aid, Recovery, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act funding, along with a portion of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, were given to Kansas through the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), the regular channel through which federal child care funding is sent to the states. Additionally, the majority of the ARPA child care funding went to a new Child Care Stabilization Fund, created with the mission to support providers trying to stay open during the pandemic.

Here's a breakdown of how those funds have been or will be spent.

### Phase 1: CARES Act, March 2020

**\$30.8 million (\$0 remaining)**

- Hero Relief (Providers) – \$11.4 million
- Hero Relief (Parents) – \$8.6 million
- Child Care Health Consultant Network – \$8.3 million
- Other – \$2.5 million

Using CARES Act funds, Kansas created the Hero Relief Program in April 2020 to mitigate

the number of child care closures and help essential workers maintain continuity of care. The Hero Relief Program included many supports, such as direct payments to providers, stipends for cleaning supplies, sustainability grants to help cover labor costs, and the creation of a network of consultants for providers to call upon for help to keep their facilities safe. For parents, the HERO Relief Program expanded eligibility for child care assistance and enhanced that benefit for essential workers.

### Phase 2: CRRSA Act, Dec. 2020

**\$89.2 million (\$22.9 million remaining\*)**

Significant investments include:

- Sustainability Grants (round 1) – \$49.5 million (\$5.9 million remaining\*)
- Community Partnerships – \$9.0 million
- Hero Relief (Parents) – \$5.0 million
- Business Training & Support – \$4.0 million
- Family Needs & Preferences Survey – \$250,000

\*as of December 1, 2022

With the second phase of funding, the Department for Children and Families (DCF) continued the Hero Relief program for parents and consolidated the multiple Hero Relief programs into one “sustainability” grant.

DCF also obligated funds to help communities plan for and address their child care needs and build up local partnerships. This includes funding a variety of studies and surveys so policymakers can make informed decisions and put the money in the right places.

### Phase 3: ARPA, March 2021

**\$347.6 million (\$109.6 million remaining\*)**

Significant investments include:

- \$133.7 million for child care supports (\$60.5 million remaining\*)
- \$213.9 million for child care stabilization (\$49.1 million remaining\*)

\*as of December 1, 2022

In March 2022, DCF designated the child care stabilization funds (\$213.9 million) go toward direct payments to providers, similar to the sustainability grants from the Hero Relief Program. Rather than break it into three-month intervals, the application now covers nine months of grant funding for licensed providers in amounts dependent upon the type and size of their child care setting. This is an important support that will keep experienced early educators on the job and Kansas kids in reliable, high-quality child care.

With parameters set by the federal government, Kansas is developing a plan from the remaining discretionary child care funds. One priority must be lowering the cost of care. As noted, DCF has already expanded the income-eligibility criteria for child care assistance, but the amount of that assistance is too low. Rather than using the “market rate” to determine the size of the subsidy, Kansas should explore using a “cost of care” model to set the rate so providers who serve low-to-moderate income households can be compensated properly based on the work they do and won’t be financially penalized.

Additionally, a portion of these funds will go toward expanding the child care health consultant program, cover provider costs of background checks and licensing fees, implement a quality rating and improvement system statewide, and build a Kansas child care workforce registry. A career pathway is also being developed using these funds. This pathway gives potential and experienced providers a roadmap into the field as well as paths to improve their practice.

Not since the creation of federal child care assistance in 1933 have we seen federal investment in early childhood education of this size and scope. We hope Congress will continue to support the programs Kansas has built. The changes our state has implemented – expanding subsidy eligibility, enhanced tuition assistance, and direct financial support for early educators – have been needed for years and will continue to be needed after these federal funds run out.

The needs are great, but our early learning stakeholders are resourceful and resilient. With help from Congress and the Kansas Legislature, we’ll be able to target investments to ensure that every child has access to reliable, affordable, high-quality early childhood care and education.



Kansas Action for Children is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to make Kansas a place where every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive. We work across the political spectrum to improve the lives of Kansas children through bipartisan advocacy, partnership, and information-sharing on key issues.