



Project LAUNCH—Finney County

More than 600 Finney County families with young children, as well as other families across the State will benefit from a \$4.25 million grant recently awarded to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (80% of the funding goes toward efforts in Finney County). Project LAUNCH, from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, is a five year cooperative agreement that supports coordination of state and local early childhood services. The purpose is to promote the wellness of young children from birth to eight years of age by addressing the physical, emotional, social, cognitive and behavioral aspects of their development. KU's Institute for Educational Research and Public Service wrote the grant on behalf of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, the Kansas Early Learning Coordinating Council, and the Finney County Community Health Coalition.

Through state and local collaboration, evidence-based services such as mental health consultation for child care and early education providers, integration of behavioral health and primary care, developmental assessments in a range of settings, family strengthening programs, parenting skills training, home visitation and other supportive programs will be implemented or enhanced.

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Highlights:

- Development and distribution of a calendar focused on providing information to parents of children ages 0-8. This project successfully formed unique partnerships that included the largest business in the community (Tyson Fresh Meats) and key community organizations, including the Center for Children and Families, St. Catherine Hospital, Kansas Children's Service League, Parents as Teachers, Smart



Start, Court Appointed Special Advocates, and others. The calendar is available free of charge as a result of partnerships and funding through Project LAUNCH. Ten thousand calendars were printed and approximately 9,000 have been distributed to date, 3,000 of which were distributed to employees of Tyson Fresh Meats. Calendars were also distributed to children in Garden City and Holcomb schools. The calendar is printed in English and Spanish and features important information for parents on a variety of topics including reading, oral health, nutrition, encouraging learning, fatherhood, choosing quality caregivers, school involvement, and positive interaction. The calendar includes a community resources guide with contact information for local services.

- Established a public awareness workgroup to organize activities for National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, to promote text4baby, and to implement Born Learning. As part of this effort, information about the new Text4baby campaign has been widely disseminated in Finney County. The informational flyer has been translated into Somali and will soon be available in Spanish and Burmese. Text4baby is a free mobile information service designed to promote maternal and child health. An educational program of the National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition (HMHB), text4baby provides pregnant women and new moms with information to help them care for their health and give their babies the best possible start in life. Women who sign up for the service by texting BABY to 511411 (or BEBE in Spanish) will receive free SMS text messages each week, timed to their due date or baby's date of birth.