

# Improving Child Care in Kansas

## Why do we need to improve child care in Kansas?

Kansas is lagging behind when it comes to providing adequate consumer protections in our child care system. Just as we provide consumer protections that ensure the safety of our restaurants, gas pumps and beauty salons, we need to ensure the safety of child care facilities. Right now, 1 in 3 child care facilities in Kansas are never inspected and we have some of the weakest child care supervision standards in the country. As a result:

- **30 Kansas children have died** in child care settings over the past three years
- **72 Kansas children sustained serious injuries** in child care last year alone
- **Our state ranks 47th in the nation** in terms of child care oversight

## How will SB 447 improve child care?

SB 447 is a critical step toward improving the quality and safety of child care in Kansas. Here's what the bill **will** do:

- **Inspect all child care facilities.** SB 447 will ensure that each child care facility, including "registered" providers are inspected on an ongoing basis. Over the next three years, Kansas Department of Health & Environment (KDHE) resources will be focused under this bill on inspecting "registered" providers — which are currently never inspected — as well as those providers that are not currently in compliance.
- **Establish a risk-based inspection system.** SB 447 will require that KDHE develop a system by 2013 for the ongoing inspection of all providers based upon risk. This system, much like the system we use in Kansas to inspect restaurants, will ensure that resources are most focused on the riskiest facilities. Therefore, providers with a history of strong compliance will be inspected less frequently, freeing up resources to be spent on child care facilities where risks are evident.
- **Improve supervision standards in Kansas.** Right now, Kansas has some of the weakest supervision standards in the nation when it comes to child care. SB 447 makes improvements by addressing the supervision of napping children and the supervision of infants and toddlers, who tend to be the most vulnerable children. Research shows that children who are napping and the youngest children are the most likely to be injured or die due to a lack of supervision in child care.
- **Create an online database for parents and providers.** SB 447 will require establishment of an online database that will make open records related to child care more accessible to parents, and simplify the paperwork process for child care providers. This database, modeled after online systems used in other states, will enable parents to check if their providers (or prospective providers) are in compliance with state standards. This system will be paid for utilizing federal stimulus dollars and does not require any state dollars.

## What misinformation is out there about SB 447?

There is quite a bit of incorrect information being discussed about this bill. Here's what it will **not** do:

- **Families caring for their own children.** SB 447 has no impact on families who care for their own children, regardless of the number of children they have.
- **Informal child care.** SB 447 does not change existing rules regarding informal child care arrangements, such as parents who have arrangements with a friend, neighbor or family member who is not registered/licensed with the state to care for children.
- **Availability and cost of child care.** SB 447 does not change the number of children that child care providers are permitted to care for and, therefore, would not impact the availability and cost of child care in the state.
- **Provider-parent relationship.** SB 447 does not limit or address in any way the amount of time that providers can spend talking with parents.



Founded in 1979, Kansas Action for Children is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to shaping policy that improves the lives of Kansas children and their families.