In 2010, policymakers passed landmark legislation to protect Kansas children. Lexie’s Law, named for a Kansas toddler who suffered a preventable fatal injury while in child care, strengthened Kansas child care licensing requirements to help prevent future tragedies. This law:

» Requires that all child care be licensed and inspected;
» Strengthens supervision requirements to reduce the risk of children’s death or injury;
» Requires child care licensees to hold a high school diploma or the equivalent (like a GED); and
» Created an online database to help parents research child care options.

Now Kansas has the opportunity to build on its commitment to safe, high-quality child care. Congress passed federal legislation in 2014 that requires states to review and update child care licensing laws and regulations. As a result, the Kansas Department for Health and Environment is revising Kansas child care policies. Proposed improvements include requiring more comprehensive background checks for child care providers, expanding the topics covered in health and safety orientations, and increasing continuing education requirements to align with evidence-based best practices.

These improvements will help reduce the risk of serious injury or harm to children in child care and help providers better prevent, recognize, and correct health and safety problems that could endanger children.
Kansas policymakers should support these improvements, which will help reduce the risk of serious injury or harm to children in child care. Specifically, policymakers can:

» Maintain Kansas’ statutory licensing requirements for safe child care established by Lexie’s Law;
» Pass legislation that will update Kansas background check requirements for child care providers, in compliance with the new federal law; and
» Support the Kansas Department for Health and Environment’s efforts to update child care regulations as it collects public comment.

Ultimately, these policies will promote the health, safety, and early education of all Kansas children in child care, and Kansas should seize this opportunity to improve its child care system.