



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education
in support of Senate Bill 169**

February 21, 2013

Chair Abrams and Members of the Committee:

I am Trudy Racine, Vice President of Operations for the Kansas Children's Service League. I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 169. The mission of the Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL) is "to protect and promote the well-being of children." We are the Kansas chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America.

Our testimony addresses Section 4 of the bill, concerning grants for research-based interventions and strategies to assist pupils with acquiring reading skills and to provide training and education on those interventions and strategies.

We support this proposal to improve fourth grade reading scores by targeting resources toward evidence-based early interventions. Research shows that learning begins at birth. The human brain develops more rapidly between birth and age five than during any other subsequent period; however, 95% of public investment occurs after age five. In order to be ready for school, children need to be able to interact with others, pay attention, follow directions, finish tasks, and practice what they have learned. Reading to and with children at young ages maximizes literacy development. Children who know the alphabet when they enter kindergarten are 20 times as likely to be able to read simple words aloud at the end of kindergarten. However, about one out of five children are not prepared with the literacy skills to succeed in kindergarten.

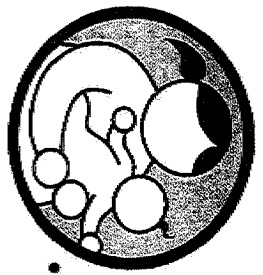
Effective early interventions are especially important for children living in poverty. Those children often struggle in school because they are less familiar with books and language, which are the building blocks for literacy. Low income children begin school as many as 18 months behind their more affluent peers. Students who are behind in the first grade are likely to remain behind in grade four. Children living in poverty who can't read on grade level by third grade are 13 times less likely to graduate on time than their peers.

As the attached graphic shows, if we can get children started on the right track, the benefits to them and society are life-long. KCSL's Healthy Families program is one example of a home visitation program that has been proven effective for reading readiness as well as preventing child abuse and neglect, as the attached fact sheet shows.

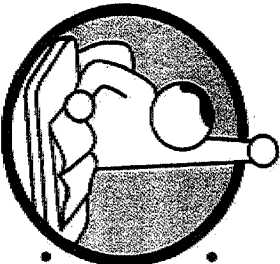
Senate Education Committee
Date 2-25-13
Attachment 2-1

Early investments that support quality early childhood development have lifelong benefits

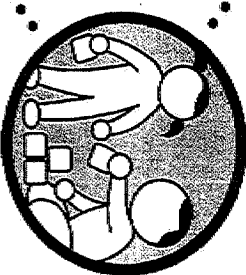
Source: Greater Richmond Chamber, "Success by Six"



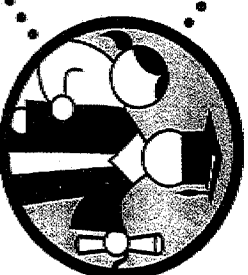
If families and caregivers can provide quality early childhood development, then children will start school ready to learn.



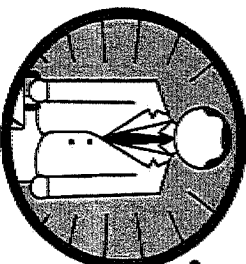
If children read at grade level by 3rd grade they are more likely to graduate from high school.



If children start school ready to learn, they are more likely to read at grade level by 3rd grade.



If children graduate from high school, they are more likely to go on to higher education and/or enter the job market as a tax-paying citizen.



Employable, tax-paying citizens are critical to a vital economy.

Connect the dots...



Kansas Children's Service League

Kansas Reading Initiative – SFY 2014

Development of a Pre-Literacy Foundation for Successful Learning Healthy Families America Proposal

The Need

The Kansas Kindergarten Assessment Initiative Report, issued in April 2008 by the University of Kansas in collaboration with the Kansas Health Institute and the Kansas State Department of Education, found that 16.5 % of Kansas children entering Kindergarten could experience problems. Several subgroups do significantly less well at Kindergarten entry, including English Language Learners, students at risk due to income constraints, and those with special educational needs. The study stated those subgroups could benefit from additional support and preparation for learning, either through preschool preparation, additional community support for education, family support, or any of a multitude of factors that impact school readiness and early childhood support.

The Idea

When you read, talk, or play with a child, you are stimulating the growth of the child's brain and building the connections that will become the building blocks for reading

- Appropriate child development during the first three years of life is a prerequisite of school readiness and pre-literacy skills
- Through a comprehensive home visitation program for children aged 0-3, parents obtain the skills necessary to provide a rich learning environment at home that prepares children for school and learning to read

Preliteracy and School Readiness

When a child's early experience is "impoverished, neglectful or abusive, the result can be a lifetime of increased risk." (Harvard, 2007 National Scientific Council)

- By age 3, a child's brain is already 80% developed; 90% by age 5.
- Four year olds from low-income families are often 18 months behind other 4 year olds developmentally.
- An estimated 60% of low-income families have no books in their homes for children.
- Children living in poverty without access to high-quality early education programs are 50% more likely to be placed in special education; 25% more likely to drop out of school; 60% more likely to never attend college; 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime; and 40% more likely to be a teen parent.
- Parents who live in poverty are often silent and children in these homes may hear only 200 words an hour compared to the average family speaking 400 words an hour.

Early Steps to School Success

Healthy Families America is an evidence based home visitation program provided for children ages 0-3 and their family. There is a direct connection between reading aloud and later reading success. Children learn to speak, and become prepared to read, in the early years through the level of talk that occurs in the home, before age 3. Children who are exposed to interactive literacy-rich environments, full of fun opportunities to learn language, will develop pre-literacy skills.

- Regular home visits by a trained paraprofessional, which are intensive and comprehensive, flexible and culturally appropriate to ensure healthy child development.
- Parenting education, teaching parents the important role and responsibilities they hold in their child's educational development.
- Early identification of development delays and well baby checks are completed
- Economic stabilization and financial management skills are achieved

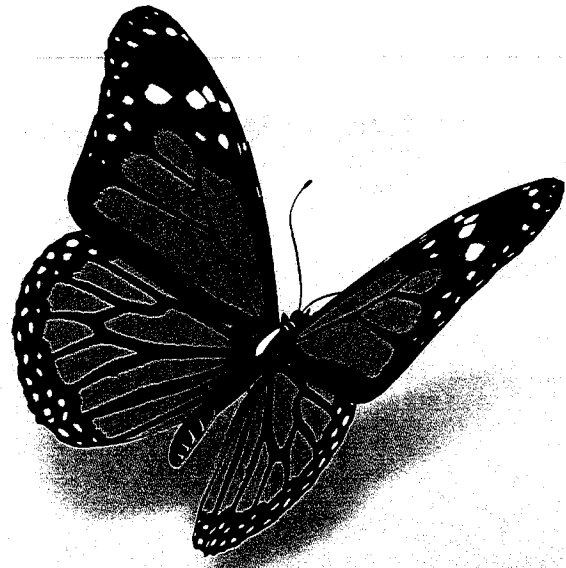
The Proposal

Approach: Expand Healthy Families America services to families in seven counties (WY, JO, SN, LY, RN, SG, and FI) with an assessed risk related to:

- English as a second language
- poverty
- child abuse and neglect
- and/or mental health concerns.

Referral Sources: OB/GYN's, hospitals, local health departments, community based early childhood service organizations, Department for Children and Families

Funding: \$1.0 million. The cost for a unit of service is \$119 per home visit. Through this proposal KCSL will provide a minimum of 8,400 home visits to 175 families.

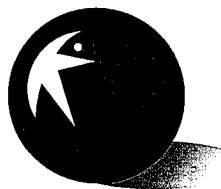


The Results

In 2012, KCSL's Healthy Families America program served 600 children in 19 Kansas Counties. They achieved:

- Improved economic self-sufficiency
- Improved child developmental outcomes
- Improved school readiness

For more information, contact Dona Booe, President/CEO, Kansas Children's Service League, (785) 215-6423 or dbooe@kcsl.org.



**Kansas Children's
Service League**