



# Tri-County Smart Start At A Glance

## What is Tri-County Smart Start?

Tri-County Smart Start (TCSS) is a quality improvement initiative working to increase the number of quality early learning programs in Johnson, Leavenworth and Wyandotte Counties. TCSS funds participation in professional development and in the Kansas Quality Rating System (KQRS), which includes coaching, assessment, and quality improvement mini-grants for 39 early childhood programs. 19 of the 39 programs also receive wage compensation.

## What is the goal of Tri-County Smart Start?

The goal is to ensure that children enter school prepared to succeed. TCSS is accomplishing this by:

- 1) Reducing the high teacher turnover rates that plague many early learning programs;
- 2) Increasing the number of teachers with two and four-year college degrees in early childhood education;
- 3) Helping early childhood programs achieve state-recognized quality standards and NAEYC accreditation.

## What outcomes can be expected?

- Early childhood teachers will be better educated and will gain expertise in advancing the learning and development of children;
- Teacher turnover will decrease, and children will benefit from the stability and consistency of relationships and care;
- Children will have the social-emotional and cognitive skills they need to be successful in school;
- Our counties and their communities will thrive along with our children.

## How many children are served by TCSS?

Tri-County Smart Start is working with 39 early learning programs and serves over 2900 children.

## How is Tri-County Smart Start funded?

The initiative is funded primarily through a grant from the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust. The funds derive from the state's portion of the Master Tobacco Settlement. TCSS has received an average of \$670,000 a year since 2001. In 2007 and 2008, TCSS was awarded \$917,378. Other funding for the initiative is provided by the United Ways of Johnson, Leavenworth and Wyandotte Counties, along with in-kind contributions from businesses and community partners. The United Way of Wyandotte County, which leads the initiative, continues to seek other state and private funding to expand the program.

## How many other communities are involved in Smart Start?

The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust has funded initiatives covering 47 Kansas counties.

## Who I should I contact for more information?

Contact Tri-County Smart Start Director, Jennifer McDonald at (913) 371-3674 or email at [jmcdonald@unitedway-wyco.org](mailto:jmcdonald@unitedway-wyco.org).