



# Tri-County Smart Start At A Glance

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## What is Tri-County Smart Start?

Tri-County Smart Start is a quality improvement initiative working to increase the number of quality early learning programs in Johnson, Leavenworth and Wyandotte counties. Funds, training and coaching are provided to 22 early learning programs in the three counties to improve teacher wages and benefits, and provide tuition assistance for higher education.

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

The goal is to ensure children enter school prepared to succeed. Tri-County Smart Start is accomplishing this by:

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

## What outcomes can be expected?

- Children will have the social-emotional and cognitive skills they need to be successful in school;
- 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;
- Our counties and their communities will thrive along with our children.

## How many children are served by Tri-County Smart Start?

Tri-County Smart Start is working with 22 early learning programs that serve 1,400 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. Tri-County Smart Start has received an average of \$670,000 a year since 2001. In 2006, Tri-County Smart Start was awarded \$857,400. 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 should I contact for more information?

Contact Tri-County Smart Start Director Mindy Higgins at (913) 371-3674, or e-mail [mhiggins@unitedway-wyco.org](mailto:mhiggins@unitedway-wyco.org).

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