



Community Plan

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Section 1

General Information

The PAK Empowerment board was designated in 1998. The board is made up of 17 members from different areas including two county of board supervisors, two education representatives, two public health representatives, a faith, human services, business and consumer representative. The board also has many childcare providers and parents from both counties as members. The board meets on the 4th Monday of every month.

Vision

Partners in Palo Alto and Kossuth (PAK) Empowerment Area believe that developmental opportunities for children ages birth to five play a critical role in establishing lifelong patterns. Children in this population groups are ready to learn and develop the perceptual framework that will guide their lives. Along with the provision of basic needs such as food, shelter, and safety, qualities such as family support, positive identity, social competency, and a nurturing environment are essential for lifelong healthy development.

Mission

- Provide developmentally appropriate learning experiences for all children age birth to 5.
- Provide training support to parents and other caregivers of the birth to 5 populations.
- Prepare children age birth to 5 with the skills needed to learn to be ready to take advantage of educational opportunities and learn to the best of their ability.

Philosophy

In order to make a difference in the lives of young children, the community must work together with the same goal to achieve the same outcomes. It is only by collaborative planning with parents, education, business, faith, health, human services and other community organizations that we will be able to assess and implement services to help young children achieve success in life.

Geographic Composition

Palo Alto and Kossuth Counties are located in Northwest Iowa. The population of Palo Alto county is 10,147 and Kossuth county has 17,163 residents. Emmetsburg is the largest town in Palo Alto county and Algona is the largest town in Kossuth County. There are many school districts in each county.

Palo Alto county school districts

Ruthven-Ayshire Community School	Pre-12
Emmetsburg Community School District	ECSE-12
West Bend-Mallard	ECSE-12

Emmetsburg Catholic School	Pre-8
St. Peter and Paul's Catholic School	K-6
Graettinger Community School District	Pre-12

Kossuth county school districts

Central Community School District	K-12
Algona Community School District	ECSE-12
North Kossuth Community School District	ECSE-12
Bishop Garrigan/Seton Catholic School	Pre-12
Woden/Crystal Lake/Titonka Consolidated	Pre-12
Corwith/Wesley/Luverne Consolidated	Pre-12
St. John's Catholic School	K-8

Children who do not attend a preschool program in their school district might attend other programs throughout the county.

Palo Alto County

TLC Childcare Center
 Little Learners Childcare Center
 St. Paul's Christian Preschool
 Small World Preschool – West Bend

Kossuth County

Kid's of the Kingdom Preschool
 St. Michael's Preschool
 Trinity Little Lambs Preschool
 St. John's Preschool
 Small World Preschool - Ledyard

There are a few childcare centers in the counties, both of which reside in Palo Alto county and are listed above as offering preschool. A majority of the childcare services offered are home-based. Currently there are 30 registered childcare providers in Palo Alto county and 19 registered providers in Kossuth county.

There are three Headstart programs located in the PAK Empowerment area.

Headstart Programs in Palo Alto County

Emmetsburg

Headstart Programs in Kossuth County

Algona
 Fenton/Sentral

Demographics

County Population

Palo Alto County = 10,147
Kossuth County = 17,163

Population of children age 0-5

Palo Alto County = 550
Kossuth County = 931

Number of births (2002)

Palo Alto County = 110
Kossuth County = 168

Number of families

Palo Alto County = 2,674
Kossuth County = 4,792

Number of married couple families

Palo Alto County = 2,317
Kossuth County = 4,214

Number of male householder

Palo Alto County = 116
Kossuth County = 172

Number of female householder

Palo Alto County = 241
Kossuth County = 406

Number of children under 6 living in families or subfamilies

Palo Alto County = 700
Kossuth County = 1225

Children under 6 living with two parents

Palo Alto County = 519
Kossuth County = 962

Children under 6 living with two parents with one parent in labor force

Palo Alto County = 136
Kossuth County = 248

Children under 6 living with two parents with both parents in labor force

Palo Alto County = 373
Kossuth County = 700

Children under 6 living with mother only

Palo Alto County = 149
Kossuth County = 180

Children under 6 living with mother only with mother in labor force

Palo Alto County = 93
Kossuth County = 142

Children under 6 living with father only

Palo Alto County = 32
Kossuth County = 80

Children under 6 living with father only with father in the labor force

Palo Alto County = 32
Kossuth County = 80

Date Source: SETA (www.seta.iastate.edu), U.S. Bureau of the Census, and the Iowa Dept. of Public Health

Section 2

Community Needs Assessment

The PAK Empowerment board feels very strongly that many of the needs that were identified in the initial needs assessment and community forums that were held during the designation process continue to be accurate. Through a community assessment with surveys done by Kossuth Childcare Action Committee, the board understands that the desire for more childcare in Kossuth county continues to get stronger. The results reflect the low number of registered childcare providers anticipates that further assessment may need to be done in the near future to reflect the changing needs in Kossuth county concerning childcare.

Sources for Information for Assessment

Upper Des Moines Opportunity
Kossuth Childcare Action Committee
ISU Extension
Public Health
Kindergarten Readiness Surveys

Community Needs

- Improved prenatal care for pregnant women leading to healthier children
- Expand in-home visitation services leading to parents who are better able to:
 - Provide a secure and nurturing environment for their children
 - Select childcare environments for their children that are equally nurturing and secure
- Improved education for parents and childcare providers leading to:
 - Caregivers who are more knowledgeable about early brain development
 - Children who are better prepared to succeed in school
- Increased number of childcare providers who have received child development education leading to a corresponding increase in the number of children cared for in nurturing childcare environments.
- Maintain lead-screening efforts leading to a reduction in elevated blood lead levels in children.

Community Indicators

% of confirmed child abuse reports
% of women receiving adequate prenatal care
% of families receiving pre and/or postnatal in-home visits
% of children in Palo and Kossuth Counties receiving immunizations as recommended
of parent training sessions held in Palo Alto and Kossuth Counties
of registered providers in Palo Alto and Kossuth Counties
of childcare providers in attendance at trainings
% of children tested for elevated blood levels
% of children who were reported to have increased frequency or consistency with developmental skills needed for kindergarten readiness

Community Indicators	Baseline Data		2003		2004		2005	
	PA	K	PA	K	PA	K	PA	K
% of confirmed child abuse reports	59	72	43	78	46	62	38	69
% of women receiving adequate prenatal care	85.3 %	81.7 %	91.5 %	72%	100%	89.5 %	97%	89%
% of families receiving pre and/or postnatal in-home visits	10%	19.7 %	97%	40%	72%	47%	95%	38%
Immunization Rate	93%	96%	95.5 %	95%	85%	98.8 %	82%	91.1 %
# of parent training sessions	12	18	22	34	18	18	16	22
# or registered providers	23	21	24	19	28	22	30	19
# of childcare providers in attendance at trainings	25	10	18	37	38	54	81	36
% of children tested for elevated blood levels	10%	9.8%	16.9 %	15.5 %	16.7 %	14.5 %	15.3 %	18.3 %
% of children with kindergarten readiness skills	81%		81%		84%		86%	

As the data shows, PAK Empowerment has been successful in meeting the needs of the community.

Resources supporting children and their families

Prairie Lakes AEA 8	ISU Extension
Palo Alto Community Health	Department of Human Services
Kossuth Community Health	Local Businesses
Public Libraries	WIC Program
YMCA	Child care homes and centers
Smith Wellness Center	County Board of Supervisors
Child Care Resource and Referral	Local School Districts
Local Preschools	Local Churches
Parents, consumers and citizens	

Identification of Federal, State, Local and Private Funding Sources Available for Services to Children Age 0-5

	Kossuth	Palo Alto	Combined
Prevent Child Abuse Iowa Grant	\$10,000	\$19,300	\$29,300
Headstart	\$165,600	\$150,000	\$315,600
School Ready Grant			\$387,905
Early Childhood Grant			\$34,131
USDA Grant *			
Region 8 Early ACCESS Council			\$28,436
United Way	\$18,000		
Tobacco Grant			
Department of Education			\$20,044 (KIDS)
Title 19 (Billed through Healthy Families)	\$3,205	\$23,880	\$27,085
Prairie Lakes AEA 8			\$234,970
Lead Grant – Iowa Department of Public Health *			
Immunization Grant – Iowa Department of Public Health*			

* Monetary amounts for 0 – 5 yrs. unavailable

Section 3

Community Coordination and Collaboration

PAK Empowerment has a diverse board made up of persons who represent our community well. Board members and others from the community are continuously encouraged to bring new ideas to the table.

PAK Empowerment is housed within Prairie Lakes AEA which makes for strong relationship and encourages continuous collaboration. In the last year PAK has increased the amount of collaboration by funding a new position titled, Family Resource Coordinator, that supports both the PAK mission and the IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan) process. Meetings are held regularly to make sure this position continues to be successful and are meeting the needs of the intended parties. Monthly meetings are held in each county with representatives of Early Access, KIDS and PAK Empowerment, Healthy Families and respite childcare programs attending. The goal of these meetings is to promote continuous collaboration as we seek to work together to meet family needs and avoid duplication of services. By bringing these agencies together, relationships have been built and this improves the quality of home visitation programs in our Empowerment area.

PAK Empowerment also works closely with local school districts and a community center to plan and implement the Growing Together classes and large community events every fall and spring. Growing Together is funded through parent support dollars and utilizes space and teachers from the local school districts to lead the classes.

Palo Alto and Kossuth Counties also have a strong and dependable RSVP program. PAK uses volunteers to help with large community events. Along with RSVP, Girl Scout groups and local high schools groups are given the opportunity to volunteer. It has been the support of agencies, schools, volunteers and other local programs that has made PAK Empowerment successful.

Section 4

Community Planning

The PAK Empowerment Board reviews priorities and goals annually. It will be planning a board retreat to assess the efficiency of our funded programs in meeting our priorities and goals.

Evaluation and Indicators: Evaluation of the progress toward this priority will be monitored through annual report outcomes and board assessment that programs are meeting the needs of families.

Priority 1. Secure and Nurturing Environments for children

Goal 1: To increase the number of families that participate in an effective home visitation program

Strategy: To support research based, effective home visitation

Strategy: To provide collaborative support within agencies to maximize referrals.

Goal 2: To increase the number of families that participate in parent support and education groups.

Strategy: To increase the number of parent education groups provided

Priority 2: Children will be equipped with the skills needed to learn to be ready to take advantage of educational opportunities and learn to the best of their ability.

Goal 1: To increase access to and utilization of quality preschool programs

Strategy: To provide tuition assistance for low income 4 and 5 yr olds to participate in quality preschool

Strategy: To provide training to preschools to improve quality

Strategy: To provide incentives to preschools that participate in QPPS or other quality trainings.

Strategy: To provide research based parent training on early literacy.

Priority 3: Quality childcare will be accessible to all families

Goal 1: To increase the number of childcare providers that participate in quality trainings.

Strategy: To provide reimbursement for QRS and QPPS training

Strategy: To support a consultant that provides in home training and support as well as provider support groups.

Goal 2: To increase the number of daycare slots

Strategy: To provide funding for equipment and improvements that lead to increase capacity.

Strategy: To provide funding to help with start up costs for new providers.

Priority 4: Healthy Children

Goal 1: To Encourage Healthy Children

Strategy: To provide education and training about immunizations

Strategy: At risk children will be screened for lead

Strategy: To increase the number of women receiving prenatal care

Current Plan

School Ready Funds: Healthy Families
KIDS Program
Growing Together Parent Education
Respite Parent Support and Education
Tuition Assistance for Preschool
Family Resource Coordinator
Quality Improvement Stipends
Professional Development

Early Childhood Funds: Child Care Coordinator

Healthy Families

Healthy Children

Secure and Nurturing Environments for Children

- Increase the number of women receiving adequate prenatal care
- Increase the number of families receiving postnatal in home care
- Increase the immunization rate
- Increase the number of children screened for lead

Healthy Families has provided health based family support home visits since 2000. This program is based out of Kossuth and Palo Alto community health, but has achieved its strength from a collaboration with the AEA KIDS program, WIC, FAADS, and local Care Team. It works primarily with prenatal moms through infants up to 1 year. It is at this time, unless there is a health concern, that the families are referred to the KIDS program.

Healthy Families helps families prepare for the birth of a new baby and aids in the adjustment of the young child as he/she grows. Visits are focused on prenatal care, child development, health and safety issues, parenting skills, and helping the family get in touch with other community resources they may need.

Healthy Families is modeled after HOPES programs, and the nurses have completed this training. Nurses work with families to help set and achieve their goals.

KIDS Program

Secure and Nurturing Environments for Children

School Readiness

- Decrease the % of confirmed child abuse reports
- Increase the % of children with kindergarten readiness skills
- Increase the # of parent training sessions

The AEA KIDS program is a home based parent education program that helps supports families as their child grows. This program works in collaboration with Healthy Families to provide support primarily for families with children ages 1 – 5. Support topics are focused on child development, health and safety issues, parenting skills and connecting with community resources. They also work in collaboration with community preschools, respite childcare and other childcare locations to aid families in locating quality care for their child. The KIDS program has also held parent support groups that teach appropriate parenting skills, while giving parents the opportunity to support each other.

Growing Together

Secure and Nurturing Environments for Children

School Readiness

- Increase the # of parent training sessions
- Increase the % of children with kindergarten readiness skills

Growing Together is a parent education program that works in collaboration with local school districts to provide parent education to parents while providing developmentally appropriate activities for children. Children and parents attend programs together in local preschools giving children and their parents a familiarity with the school. Programs are geared for 0-5 year olds and their families.

Upon entering the class, children and parents are given a variety of developmentally appropriate activities they may do together. It provides a bonding time for parent and child while modeling kindergarten readiness skills. 30 min into the class parents and children have a circle time together consisting of a story, finger-plays and song. After circle time, children have a snack and free play time while parents participate in a discussion with information on parenting topics. Topics and information center around parenting skills, health and safety issues and early literacy. The coordinator and most preschool educators have been trained in Every Child Reads and encourage parents to use these methods of language, pre - reading and writing with their child. Along with Growing Together we will be incorporating a special class for parents with the Early Literacy Parent Training curriculum.

Respite Parent Support and Education

Secure and Nurturing Environments for Children

School Readiness

Quality Childcare will be Accessible to all Families

- Decrease the % of confirmed child abuse reports
- Increase the % of children with kindergarten readiness skills
- Increase the # of parent training sessions

Both counties have a respite care program for families. We provide financial support for these programs to provide extra care for children and parent education for families. This program works in collaboration with the KIDS program and Healthy Families to provide respite care for families with young children. Drop in childcare is very difficult to

find especially in Kossuth County. Respite nursery provides care for children to help relieve family stress. Relieving stress in families correlates with relieving all types of dangerous situations for children. It also gives parents the opportunity for support while they attend classes, dr. appointments, and run errands.

Both programs have as a requirement that parents attend parent education classes either monthly or bi-monthly. These classes support parenting training while children are being taught the skills needed prior to kindergarten. Social development is also a goal for the children that attend these programs. As we support safe and nurturing families, we are equipping children with the skills needed for school readiness.

Tuition Assistance for Preschool

School Readiness

Quality Childcare will be Accessible to all Families

- Increase the % of children with kindergarten readiness skills

One goal of PAK Empowerment has been that Quality childcare be accessible to all families. A reason for this goal is that we know quality directly relates to child development and school readiness. In the past we had a scholarship program which helped those children whose family income could not afford a quality preschool pay for it. Scholarships required preschools to have a quality component. This made for an easy transition into our current tuition assistance program.

Under the current program, preschools apply for tuition assistance dollars to pay for those children who qualify. Preschools are then required to participate in quality improvement such as QPPS. PAK has advertised in the local newspapers and radio that money is available for tuition assistance. Our goal is to reach families who may have thought preschool was not an option. We are finding many families whose income does not qualify for head start still unable to afford preschool.

The success of this program is entirely dependant on the collaboration of many programs such as Healthy Families, KIDS, respite nursery, Care Team, local preschools and others. It has been through this collaboration that we have been able to locate children who would not have otherwise attended preschool. Local preschools have worked to find spots for these children while also working to improve quality. We have been sending kindergarten readiness surveys to local schools to assess school readiness on an individual child basis. We have found an increase in the number of children who attend preschool and an increase in the number of children who are reported as school ready.

Family Resource Coordinator

Secure and Nurturing Environments for Children

- Decrease the % of confirmed child abuse reports
- Increase the % of children with kindergarten readiness skills

The Family Resource Coordinator is a new position whose primary goal centers around collaboration and finding the best resources available for the family. This is a home visitation program which works with children referred to Early Access and provides case management for the family.

Quality Improvement Stipends

School Readiness

Quality Childcare will be Accessible to all Families

- # of registered providers
- # of childcare providers in attendance at trainings
- Increase the % of children with kindergarten readiness skills

This year PAK is proposing to fund stipends for preschools and childcare locations that participate in QPPS or QRS (level 3 – 5). Increasing the level of quality requires effort and time on the part of preschool teachers and childcare providers. We are hoping this money provides an incentive for locations to participate. This program is new this year and we are hoping that we will see an increase in the number of registered providers and the numbers of providers and teachers in attendance at trainings. We also expect to see an increase in the % of children with kindergarten readiness skills. We have been keeping track with kindergarten readiness surveys the % of children with kindergarten readiness skills. In the future we will be able to correlate those findings and compare the readiness skill of children coming out of participating quality programs with those coming out of not participating programs. Of course our goal will be that all preschool programs participate in quality improvement making a correlation not needed.

Professional Development

School Readiness

Quality Childcare will be Accessible to all Families

- # of childcare providers in attendance at trainings
- Increase the % of children with kindergarten readiness skills

This funding is used to provide professional development for childcare providers and preschool educators. Last year a collaborative effort was made by the AEA, Local Community College, Childcare Resource and Referral, and three local Empowerment Areas to bring in a speaker for a training. 25 from our area participated in this training. This funding was also used in collaboration with the AEA to provide funding for extra participants in their Every Child Reads training. This year we will continue to collaborate to provide another quality training.

Child Care Coordinator

Quality Childcare will be Accessible to all Families

Secure and Nurturing Environments for Children

School Readiness

- # of childcare providers in attendance at trainings
- Increase the % of children with kindergarten readiness skills
- # of registered providers

The purpose of the Child Care Coordinator is to provide assistance and support to home providers, child care centers and preschools so that they can provide the highest quality childcare possible. This person has been working with our local programs in both Kossuth and Palo Alto for the past four years and has developed a trusted relationship with them. The Child Care Coordinator has worked with 49% of the childcare locations and 50% of the preschools this past year to increase quality performance. The Coordinator promotes an understanding of best practices to ensure quality programs. Information shared has been from FDCERS, Every Child Reads, QPPS, and QRS. The coordinator works with local preschools to complete QPPS and offers childcare locations QRS support. The childcare coordinator also collaborates with other agencies such as AEA, Community Health, Early Access, Local Schools and the KIDS program to help providers become aware of resources available to them and the families they serve.

Section 5

Expected Results/Outcomes

- Programs funded by PAK Empowerment are required to report quarterly to the board to review their program outputs and outcomes. Programs are also reviewed annually by the board. Evaluations are done to compare against projected targeted results.
- A goal of the PAK board is to review the Community Plan on an annual basis to keep focused on present goals and strategies and to make necessary changes
- The PAK board submits an annual report to the state of Iowa for review.

It is our goal that the performance outcomes correlate with the community indicators, and enhances and improves the determined community needs/priorities