



## Strengthening Economic Supports for Women in Missouri

A Toolkit funded by the MO Department of Health and Senior Services,  
Section on Women's Health

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## Introduction

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When women have access to education and meaningful employment it increases their economic security, alleviates poverty, and creates stability for themselves and their families. It also decreases gender inequality which according to the CDC reduces the risk of sexual victimization (Basile et al., 2016). Economic supports refers to any work-place policies and community-based supports that provide women with opportunities to obtain education or employment and increase their economic mobility.

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide community organizations, policymakers, and stakeholders working in sexual violence prevention with strategies and recommendations that will strengthen economic supports for women in Missouri. The recommendations are informed by a statewide needs assessment conducted by the authors of this report and are organized around five primary areas of need:

- Increase Access to Childcare
- Promote Alternative Careers
- Broaden Access to Higher Education
- Expand Transportation
- Improve Support Systems

### **Missouri Statewide Needs Assessment**

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Section of Women’s Health contracted with the University of Missouri Kansas City – Institute for Human Development (UMKC-IHD) to conduct a statewide needs assessment. First, UMKC-IHD conducted six regional focus groups to identify the barriers to education and employment experienced by Missouri women from their perspective. Next, UMKC-IHD hosted six virtual community conversations across the state. The community conversations gathered community-level strategies and policies to address the primary barriers to education and employment that the needs assessment identified. All the events during this process were attended by advocates, survivors, employment services professionals, higher education, victim services organizations, probation and parole, social services, non-profit organizations, and other community members. This toolkit is a culmination of the results of both the focus groups and the community conversations. Our team conducted a search of existing programs that fill policy or programmatic gaps identified by the participants. This toolkit includes examples of programs or policy actions, advice on how to implement them and links to learn more. Access to full previous reports are available upon request.





## Increase Access to Child Care

Affordability and availability of child care increases women's participation in the workforce (Tüzemen & Tran, 2019). Several innovative strategies and policies could increase access to quality child care such as employer-provided on-site centers, extension of child care hours, and amending state childcare subsidies so that more families qualify for assistance. Research supports that when families receive child care subsidies, either state or employer-funded, and can select their preferred care arrangements, it leads to employment stability (Morrissey, 2017).

### Offer Extended Child Care Hours

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There is a significant supply and demand gap when it comes to the availability of daycare centers open evenings and weekends. It is reported that 40% of the Americans work non-traditional employment hours (Quart, 2018). However, according to National Women's Law Center (NWLC) only 9% of day care centers are open on evenings and weekends (NWLC, 2018). The demand for extended child care hours is expected to grow and stakeholders should look for innovative ways to meet this growing need.

**24 Hr Learning Academy:** 24 Hr Learning Academy located in St. Louis, Missouri, is a licensed child care and preschool that provides a wide range of supervised activities 24 hours a day and is also open on weekends.

<https://www.kyddiekarnival.com/>

**Shifts Night Care Center:** Shift Night Care Center located in Jackson, Mississippi, is a 24 hour day care which is open 7 days weekly and 351 days annually. It offers full-time care, part-time care, non-traditional work hours and 12-hour work day.

<https://www.twlsnc24hr.com/>

### Provide Affordable Child Care

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It is reported that across the US, child care is a barrier to work, especially for mothers who cannot afford child care (Parker, 2015). In Missouri, according to Child Care Aware of America, child care was not affordable, particularly for those experiencing poverty and economic insecurity in 2019 (Child Care Aware, 2019). For instance, it was estimated that families of 3 with 2 adults and 1 child 18 and under, earning \$20,578 (100% of FPL), spent an average of 23% of their household income on child care (Child Care Aware, 2019). Increasing the availability of affordable child care centers emerged as a significant policy recommendation during the DHSS statewide focus groups (n=20).





**Head Start Program:** Head Start and Early Head Start are federally and state-funded programs that provide high-quality education, child care, and family support to income-eligible families. YWCA’s St. Louis Early Education Program provides services to more than 1,400 preschool-aged children and more than 200 infants and toddlers through its 10 YWCA Early Childhood Education Centers and as well as 13 Child Care Partner Centers throughout St. Louis County and the City of St. Louis, Missouri. These programs have demonstrated benefits for promoting maternal labor force participation and positive child outcomes (Burgess, Chien & Enchautegui, 2016). Due to their targeted nature and chronic underfunding, however, only a small portion of families who need assistance paying for child care receive it (Schochet, 2019).

<https://www.ywcastl.org/what-were-doing/head-start-and-early-head-start-2>

## Expand Child Care Assistance

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In 2018, it was reported that Missouri was one of the fifteen states where a family with an income above 150 percent of poverty (\$31,170 a year for a family of three) could not qualify for child care assistance (NWLC, 2018). In addition, around 119, 854 (8.6%) children in the state of Missouri lived in homes where head of house are grandparents or other relatives (grandfamilies.org, 2020). Increasing income eligibility cut-offs for assistance would help alleviate the cost of child care and allow more women to remain in the workforce. In addition, being able to use state childcare subsidies to support care from a family member may also help address issues of child care availability.

**Working Connections Child Care (WCC):** According to Economic Policy Institute data, in every county and city across the U.S. a family will need an income above 200 percent of poverty to adequately afford their basic needs, including child care (NWLC, 2018). The Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families has a Working Connections Child Care program to help families with low income with the income eligibility limit set at 200 percent of FPL. Parents have different provider options they may choose to best fit the needs of their family which are: Licensed or certified child care centers; Licensed or certified family child care homes; Unlicensed care, typically referred to as family, friend or neighbor (FFN) child care.

<https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/earlylearning-childcare/getting-help/wccc>





**Family, friend, and neighbor (FFN):** In March 2020, the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department, New Mexico temporarily started registering FFN providers to enable them to deliver paid child care services. Temporary FFN providers were required to complete a background check, as well all family members over the age of 18 living in their home. Temporary FFN providers were also required to complete a three hour online health and safety training and an online CPR training.

<https://cyfd.org/news/news/new-mexico-expands-child-care-eligibility-guarantees-payments-for-child-care-providers-during-public-health-emergency>

## Increase Employer Provided On-site Child Care

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Employer provided on-site child care has been found to improve employee performance and reduces absenteeism when compared to employees using an off-site center (Trautner, 2016). However, according to Society for Human Resource Management's (SHRM) 2019 Employee Benefits Survey only 4% of U.S. companies provided free onsite child care and another 4% provided subsidized onsite care (SHRM, 2019) .

**Patagonia On-site Child Care:** Patagonia, an American clothing company, has been investing in on-site child care at Ventura, California since 1983. The child care program at Patagonia is subsidized and the cost to parents is based on the market rate and subsidies are offered to employees based on income. The 2019 evaluation of Patagonia's on-site child care program revealed that 91% of the program costs to the company are directly recouped through tax benefits and employee retention and engagement (Patagonia, 2019). Patagonia reported 100% of its new moms return to work whereas across the U.S. around 35% of new moms never return to their jobs (Carter, 2016).

<https://outdoorclassroomproject.org/ocp-community/demonstration-site-network/ventura-county/great-pacific-child-development-center/>

## Flexible Child Care Licensing Requirements

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Stakeholders interested in advocating for modified child care licensing rules should create community coalitions that can advocate at the state level. While changes in licensing is not readily documented, there is interest from stakeholders from around the state to increase access to residential child care licenses, especially in rural areas.





## Promote Alternative Careers

Training and certification programs can prepare women for skilled trades and jobs that provide stable employment, benefits, and fair compensation; however, women are often not aware of these jobs and are not recruited for them. Workforce developers, educators, and trainers should develop strategies to recruit and prepare more women for middle-skill jobs such as advanced manufacturing, IT, distribution, and logistics (Hegewisch et al., 2016). Higher education and vocational training should also consider pathways that allow for smaller and more affordable credentials such as associate degrees, certificates, licenses, and badges that have value to employers and prepares women for a particular workplace (Georgetown University, 2019).

## Encourage Vocational Education

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### **Certification Programs for Skilled Trade Jobs**

Women in the U.S. are underrepresented in skilled trades as given by percentages: construction (9.9%), manufacturing (11.5%), agriculture (25%), mining (13.9%), repair and maintenance (12.5%), automotive repair (9.7%), and logging (5.9%) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). Having training, education, and certification to work in their trade of choice would enable women to find more employment opportunities.

**Registered Apprenticeships:** Working as an apprentice is one of the best ways for women to prepare for a career in skilled trades. In Missouri, Registered Apprenticeship is a highly flexible “earn while you learn” training model for employment that pays more as a worker (apprentice) reaches higher productivity levels.

<https://jobs.mo.gov/content/moapprenticeships>

**Missouri Women In Trades (MOWIT):** MOWIT is dedicated to expanding opportunities for women to enter and succeed in apprenticeship and careers in the construction and building trades of the greater St. Louis area, Missouri. They accomplish this through the following practices: Provide a support network for tradeswomen; Build awareness of the trades as a career choice; Assist women entering and completing apprenticeship programs; Improve retention among current tradeswomen; Commit to building a diverse workforce; Increase women’s equal employment opportunity and equitable working conditions; Provide recruitment and retention assistance for unions, employers and educators.

<https://www.mowit.org/>







## Career and Technical Education (CTE)

CTE are technical programs (formerly called vocational programs) that provide students with applicable skills demanded in the labor market. At the secondary level, CTE is delivered through comprehensive high schools and area career-technical centers, which provide supplemental education and career training to high school students and adult learners within the school district. At the postsecondary level, CTE is delivered through the state's community colleges, one state technical college and four-year institutions that offer associate's degree.

**Lebanon Technology and Career Center (Lebanon R-3 School District):** Lebanon Technology and Career Center has been offering students career and technical education programs for over 40 years in Missouri. From Machining to Automotive Technology, students are provided with hands-on learning that will further their abilities in the workplace or postsecondary education.

[https://www.acteonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Missouri\\_State\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](https://www.acteonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Missouri_State_Fact_Sheet.pdf)

**North Kansas City High School:** North Kansas City High School, Missouri, has incorporated three Project Lead The Way (PLTW) programs: Engineering, Biomedical and Computer Sciences. These programs are designed to give students real-world, hands-on investigations into STEM careers and opportunities.

[https://www.acteonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Missouri\\_State\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](https://www.acteonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Missouri_State_Fact_Sheet.pdf)

## Provide Career Pathways Guidance

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Career pathways guidance needs to be an integral part of every student's education, but particularly for girls and women who may not be aware of multiple types of careers available to them and their benefits. Young women should graduate from high school with an understanding of their potential career pathway and prepared for the required postsecondary education or certification necessary.

**Missouri Career Pathways:** Missouri has identified six Career Paths as a way to help students become aware of and explore careers in a logical and meaningful way. Missouri uses 16 Career Clusters as a way of organizing occupations and careers to assist educators in tailoring rigorous coursework and related activities for all students. The Career Clusters include all occupations, even those not usually found in career and technical education. Career Clusters may be used beginning in grades 7, 8 or 9, and can continue as a framework for educational planning through postsecondary education.

[https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/MCE\\_Career\\_clusters\\_centerfold.pdf](https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/MCE_Career_clusters_centerfold.pdf)





## Combining Career Pathway Training Programs with Head Start Services

Given the strong association between parent and child human capital formation (Ermisch, Jantti, and Smeeding 2012), it is recommended offering these two interventions together with the goal of achieving early childhood education for children and career pathway training for adults (Chase- Lansdale and Brooks-Gunn 2014). These combined services are now referred to as two-generation human capital programs and are beginning to increase across the U.S.

**CareerAdvance:** CareerAdvance, Tulsa, Oklahoma, is a free career training program that offers coaching, education, training and job opportunities for families in the Tulsa area. Their services include: Training and certification for high-demand healthcare careers; No cost for tuition, books or child care; and Career coaching and connections to local employers. An evaluation of this program found that parents in CareerAdvance had significantly higher rates of certification and employment in the health-care sector after one year in the program than the matched-comparison group (availing Head Start services alone) (Sommer et al., 2018).

<https://captulsa.org/what-we-offer/careeradvance/>





## Broaden Access to Higher Education

Participation in higher education or post-secondary training programs can expand women’s career pathways and earning potential. However, the cost of tuition and education-related expenses is a barrier to enrollment and persistence in a degree or certificate program. Easily available financial aid and scholarship information, more affordable tuition, and aid that covers education-related expenses (i.e. housing, childcare, etc.) all create better access to education.

### Tuition and Education-Related Expenses Assistance

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Women are unaware of the many scholarships and education assistance programs available. Making aid information easily available to women could increase their willingness to participate in a degree or certificate program. Most financial aid covers tuition costs only, but those hoping to make education more affordable should consider expenses beyond tuition such as books, transportation, child care, and housing. Students facing food and housing instability have lower academic performance and greater risk of not completing their degree program (Payne-Sturges, 2017). The scholarship programs below address both tuition and related education costs.

**Women’s Independence Scholarship Program, Inc.:** WISP provides scholarships for survivors of intimate partner violence to cover costs of tuition and educational fees. Scholarships can support women through a two or four-year degree, trade, or technical school. Additionally, they help with education-related living expenses that would otherwise be a barrier to completing a program such as rent, childcare, and transportation. Agencies serving survivors can sponsor an awardee to provide ongoing support and disperse award funds.

<https://wispinc.org/>

**Patsy Takemoto Mink Education Scholarship for Moms:** Patsy Mink Foundation provides educational support for low-income, mothers of minor children who are pursuing a first-time associates, bachelors, masters and vocational degree/certificate. Funds can be used for direct school expenses or living expenses while enrolled in the program.

<https://www.patsyminkfoundation.org/>





## Innovative Tuition Pricing

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Increasing tuition costs are correlated with decreasing college enrollment rates, particularly for non-traditional and distance learning students (Spradley, 2018). Institutions of higher education and post-secondary training programs should consider innovative tuition pricing over fee-per-credit models. Models such as guaranteed tuition rate for length of enrollment, subscription tuitions, discount-based tuition, and employer-based tuition could help lower the cost of tuition and increase persistence in seeking a degree. Stakeholders should advocate for innovative tuition policies to local boards of trustees or state-level Councils on Post-secondary Education that determine tuition rates for public universities.

<https://collegiseducation.com/news/higher-ed-trends/alternative-tuition-pricing-strategies/>





## Promote Innovative Transportation Solutions

The ability to get to and from a job can have a greater impact on employment status than education or relevant work experience particularly for women from low-income areas (Premji, 2017). Innovative transportation solutions such as employer-initiated transportation programs, extended public transit hours and areas, and assistance completing driver's license requirements could increase women's access to more competitive job opportunities.

### Expanded Public Transportation

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Lack of public transportation is commonly cited as a barrier to employment particularly in rural areas where they lack the population density to demand efficient, fixed bus-routes and often lack reliable alternatives. Innovative new strategies in public transportation intend to fill the gaps that a more traditional fixed -route system cannot such as on-demand transit, with flexible stops and ride times.

**RideKC Micro Transit:** Micro Transit is an affordable ride-hailing transportation option available in two counties in the Kansas City metro. It is run by the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority and riders can use their bus passes to operate the service. A relatively new service in the area, RideKC will continue to expand ride options and geographic areas as the demand for microtransit becomes clear. Microtransit allows an individual to hail a ride from a public vehicle (van or shuttle) through an app and be dropped off near their destination as opposed to a traditional bus-stop. Microtransit can be integrated into the larger public transportation system where riders can plan their trips and pay their fares all in one place. <https://ridekc.org/rider-guide/micro-transit>

### Employer Initiated Transportation Programs

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Employers can use innovative transportation programs by partnering with local county and state transportation authorities or private businesses such as ride share companies. Employer-subsidized transportation can help decrease employee turnover due to transportation issues, create loyalty, and increase employee-productivity.

**Employer Shared Transit Stop Pilot:** The City of Seattle and King County Metro are collaborating with Seattle Children's Hospital and Microsoft to conduct a pilot program allowing participating organizations' employer-provided shuttles to share select public transit stops with King County Metro buses. This pilot is being evaluated by Seattle Department of Transportation and King County Metro representatives using agreed-upon performance metrics and evaluation criteria. Should the pilot be deemed





successful, it may be expanded to include additional local employers and public transit stops.

<https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/transit-program/employer-shared-transit-stop-pilot>

**Lyft Business Partnership:** Businesses and universities across the U.S. have partnered with Lyft to provide ride credit to employees to get to and from office and campus locations. It is cost effective for employers who can avoid vehicle maintenance and hiring drivers and a benefit to employees who may not have public transit or personal vehicles as an option. While these innovative strategies have largely been used by companies in metropolitan areas, there is evidence to suggest it could be a helpful employer-paid benefit for smaller businesses as well.

[www.lyftbusiness.com](http://www.lyftbusiness.com)





## Improve Support Systems

Policies and programs can be leveraged to help women build strong support systems (family, social, and community) that allow the successful completion of education and retention in the workforce. Support systems for women from diverse backgrounds are especially important. This includes connecting with similar peers in the same situation, mentoring programs and supportive counseling, and a community approach to affordable child care, transportation, housing, etc. Access to an informal network of peers, faculty, and professionals from the community are correlated with matriculation and professional identity in undergraduate women (Hernandez et al., 2017). In addition, mentoring positively impacts competence, identity, and effectiveness on the job which leads to increased connection to a job or career and less employee turnover (Craig et al., 2012).

## Supportive Community Organizations

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Support systems can provide women with the necessary tools to pursue higher education, alternative career path training programs, or maintain employment. Oftentimes, women-serving not-for-profit organizations serve a specific geographic community while some others offer a franchise model. Stakeholders advocating for women should consider the role of programs, policies, or practices that make access to support systems outside of the traditional family structure available to women.

**Family Forward:** Family Forward/Redevelopment Opportunities for Women provides financial education and support to women. The organization provides therapy, financial coaching, such as banking and investing, and provides support to individuals who have experienced domestic violence. It is located in the St. Louis, MO region. Organizations that serve women can refer clients to Family Forward. Funders can invest in Family Forward or organizations similar to it in other parts of the state. Family Forward produces an annual report that quantifies the dollar amount it provided for women's support and describes the types of services provided and the annual report provides multiple examples of success stories.

<https://familyforwardmo.org/how-we-help/redevelopment-opportunities-women/>





**Dress for Success Midwest:** Dress for Success Midwest’s goal is to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support, professional attire and the development tools to help women thrive in work and in life. It is located in Missouri, (including Kansas City and St. Louis) and several other states. Dress for Success Midwest offers licenses for the Dress for Success Brand therefore local stakeholders can operate Dress for Success as an affiliate. Additionally, organizations who serve women can refer clients to this organization and funders can support the organization through grant making.

<https://kansascity.dressforsuccess.org/>

**Women’s Employment Network:** The Women’s Employment Network (WEN) is located in Kansas City, MO and helps women achieve their employment goals through personal and professional support. They provide individual services tailored to each woman’s employment needs. WEN services are free of charge and include resume review, mock interviews, financial coaching, and virtual workshops. WEN produces an annual report that provides program statistics, describes types of services provided, and provides success stories.

<https://kcwen.org/>







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